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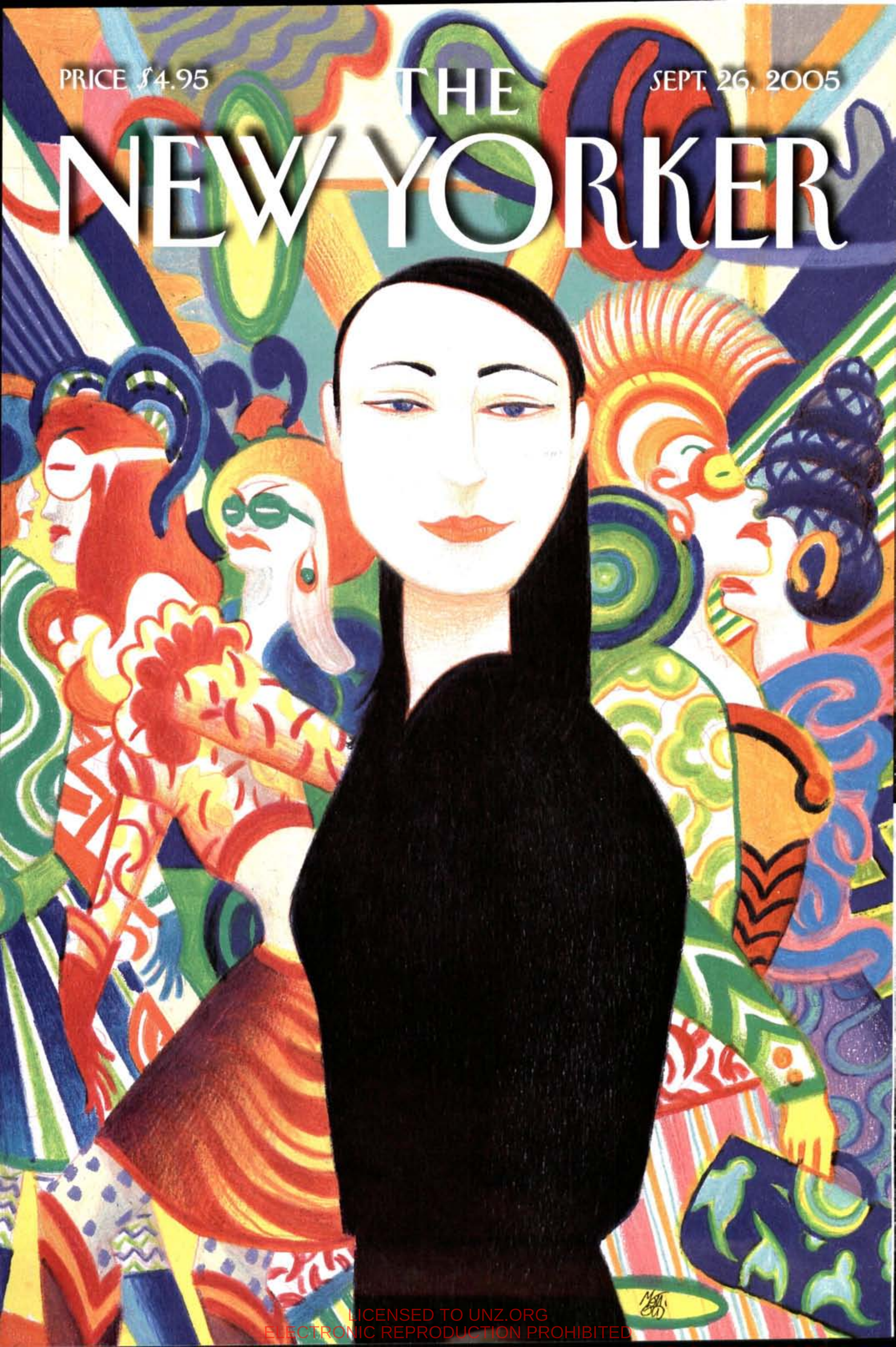

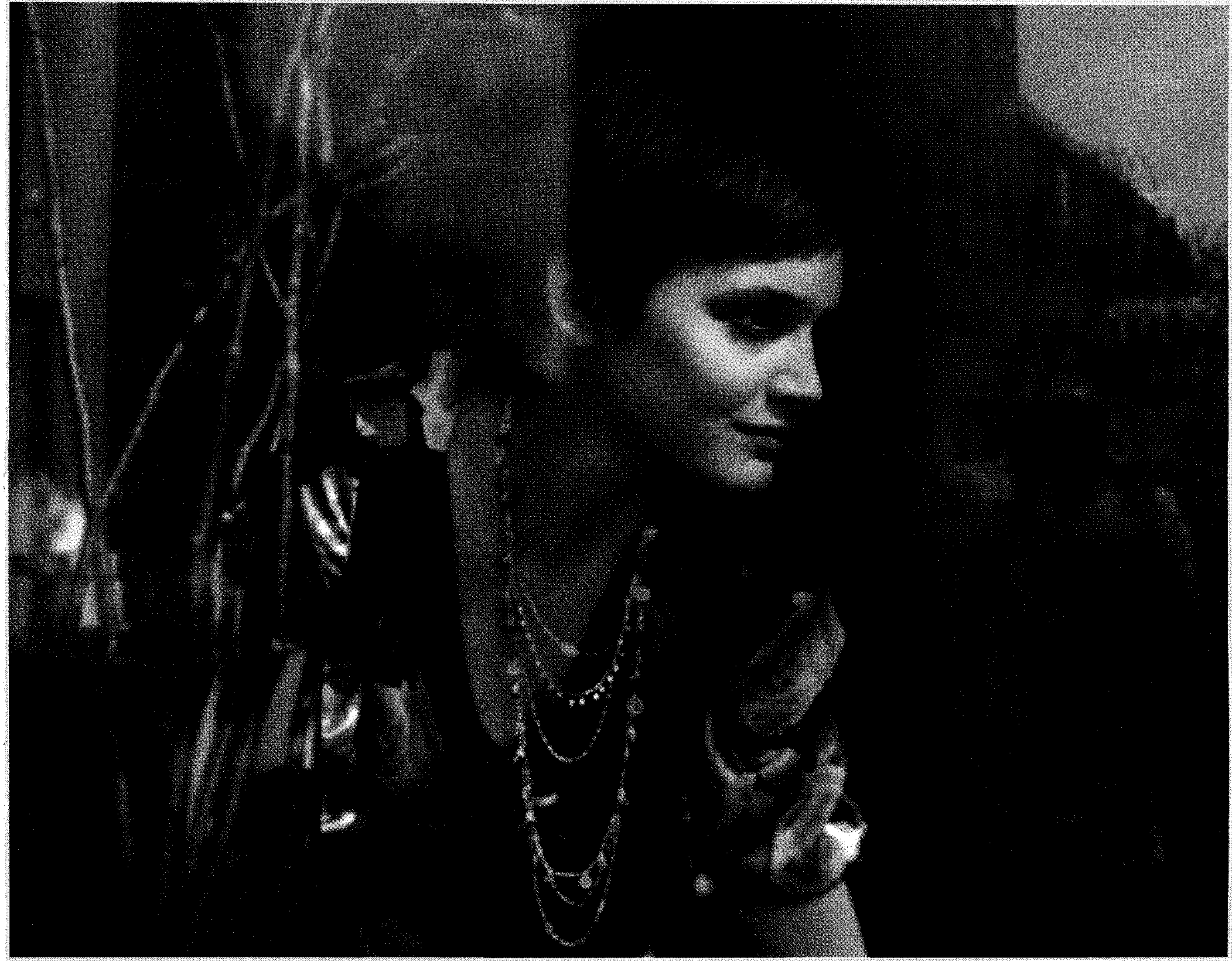

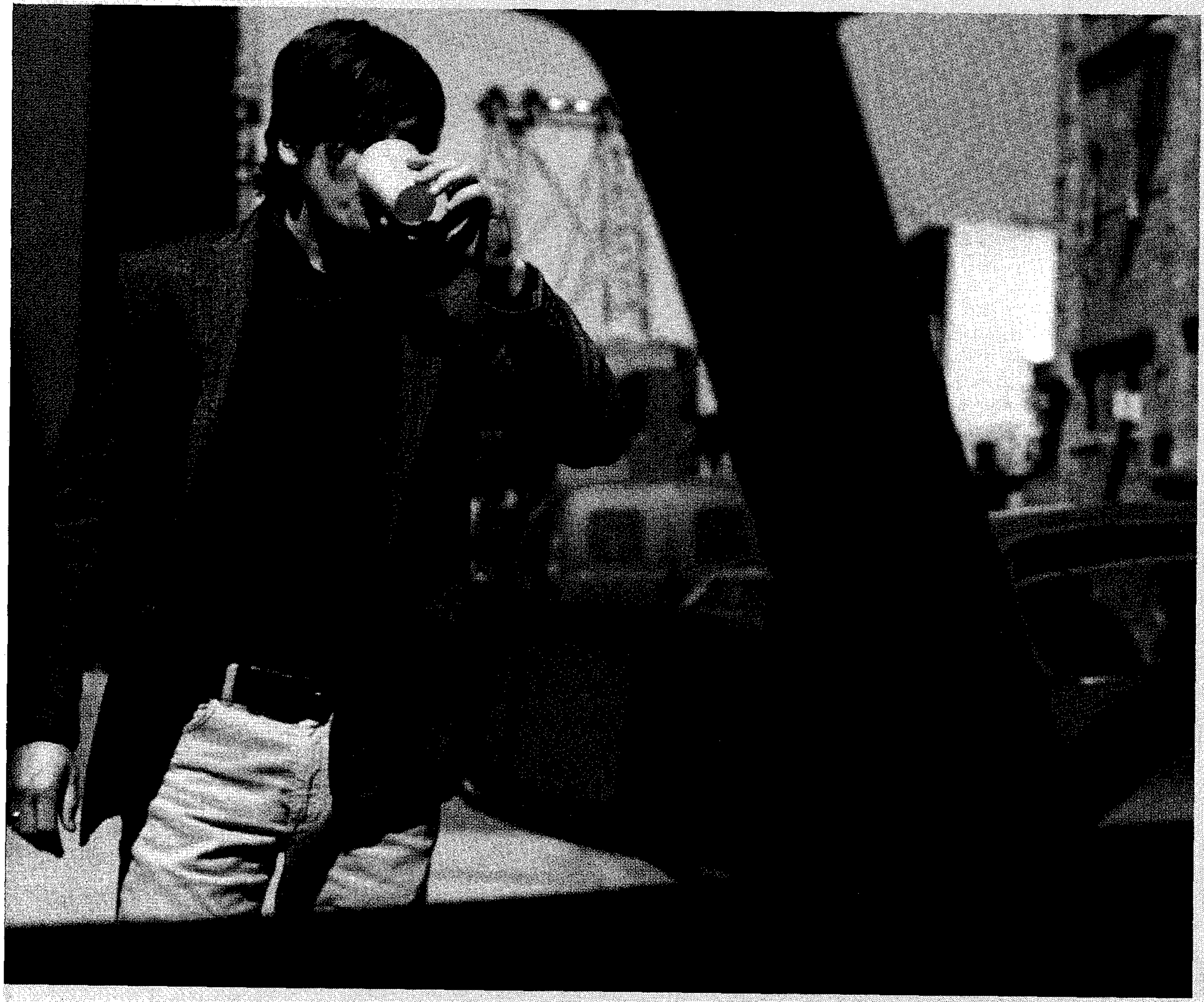

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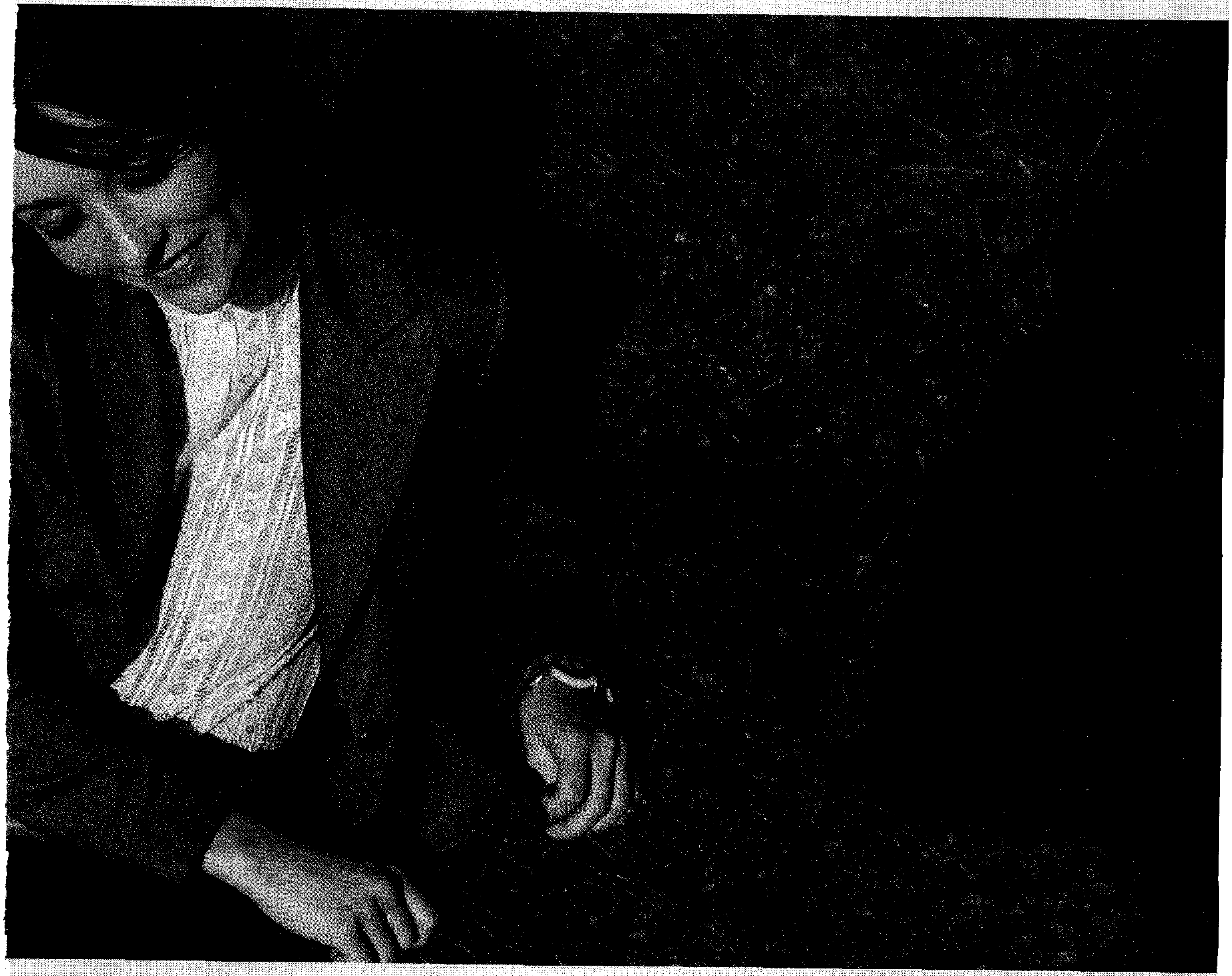

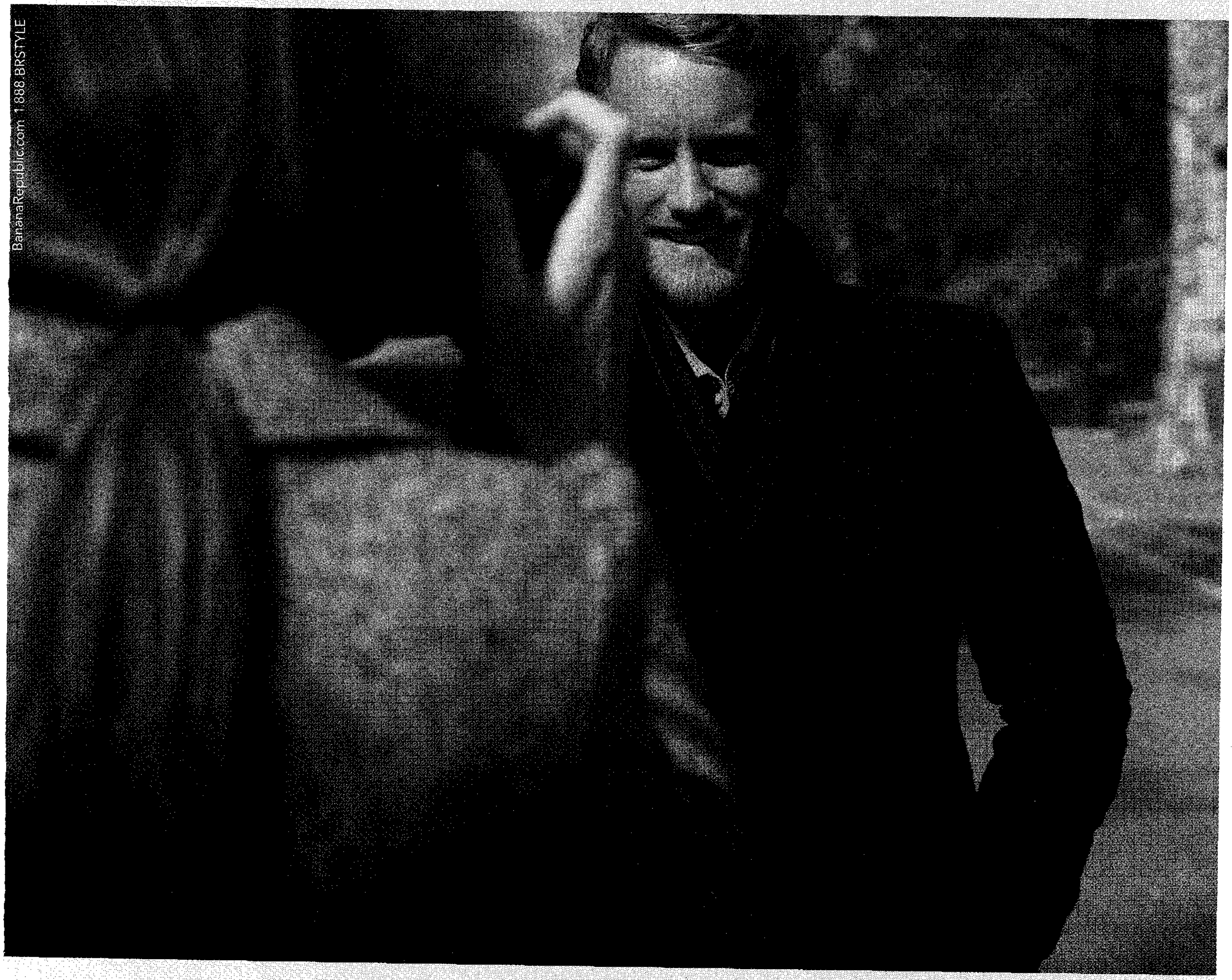
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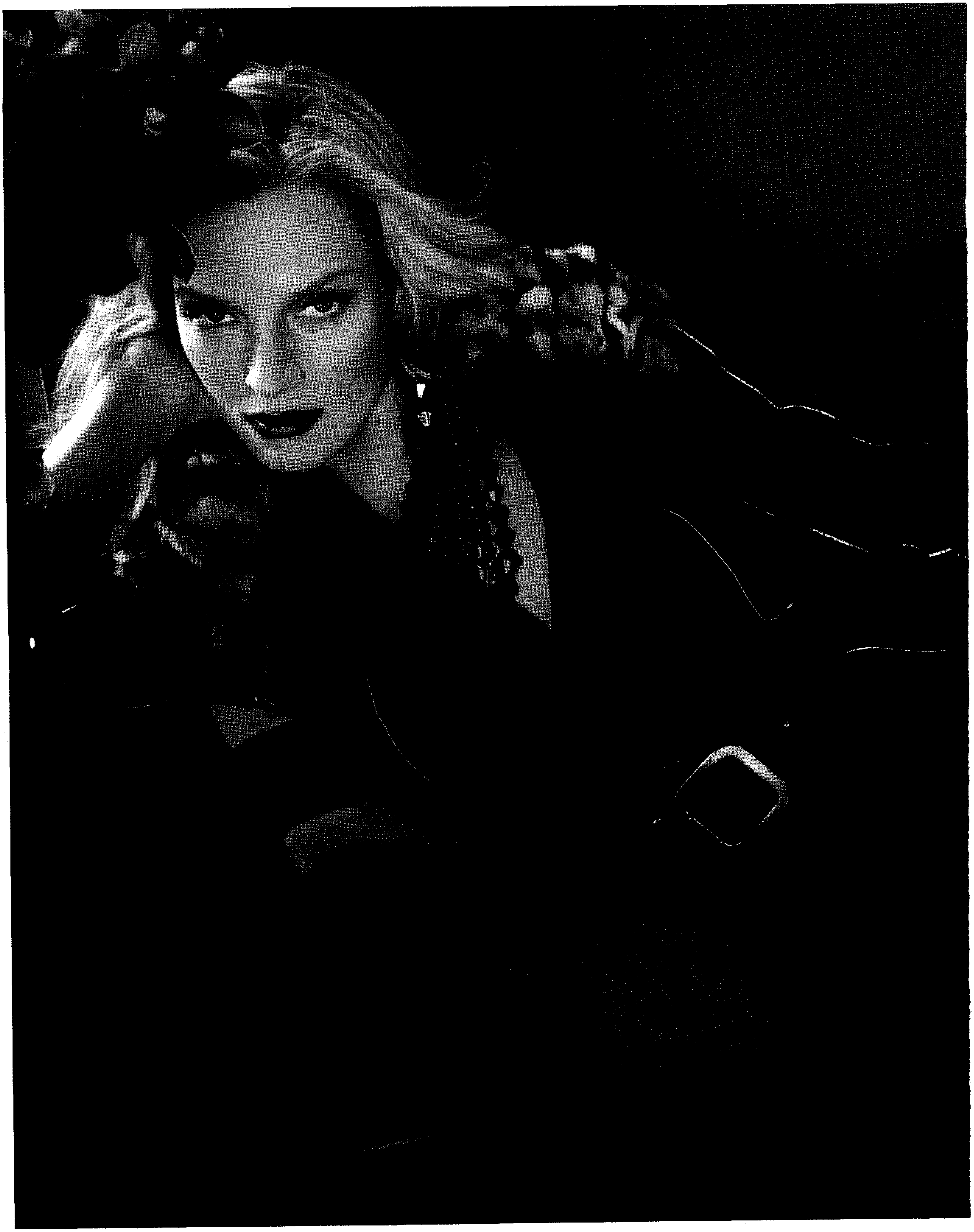

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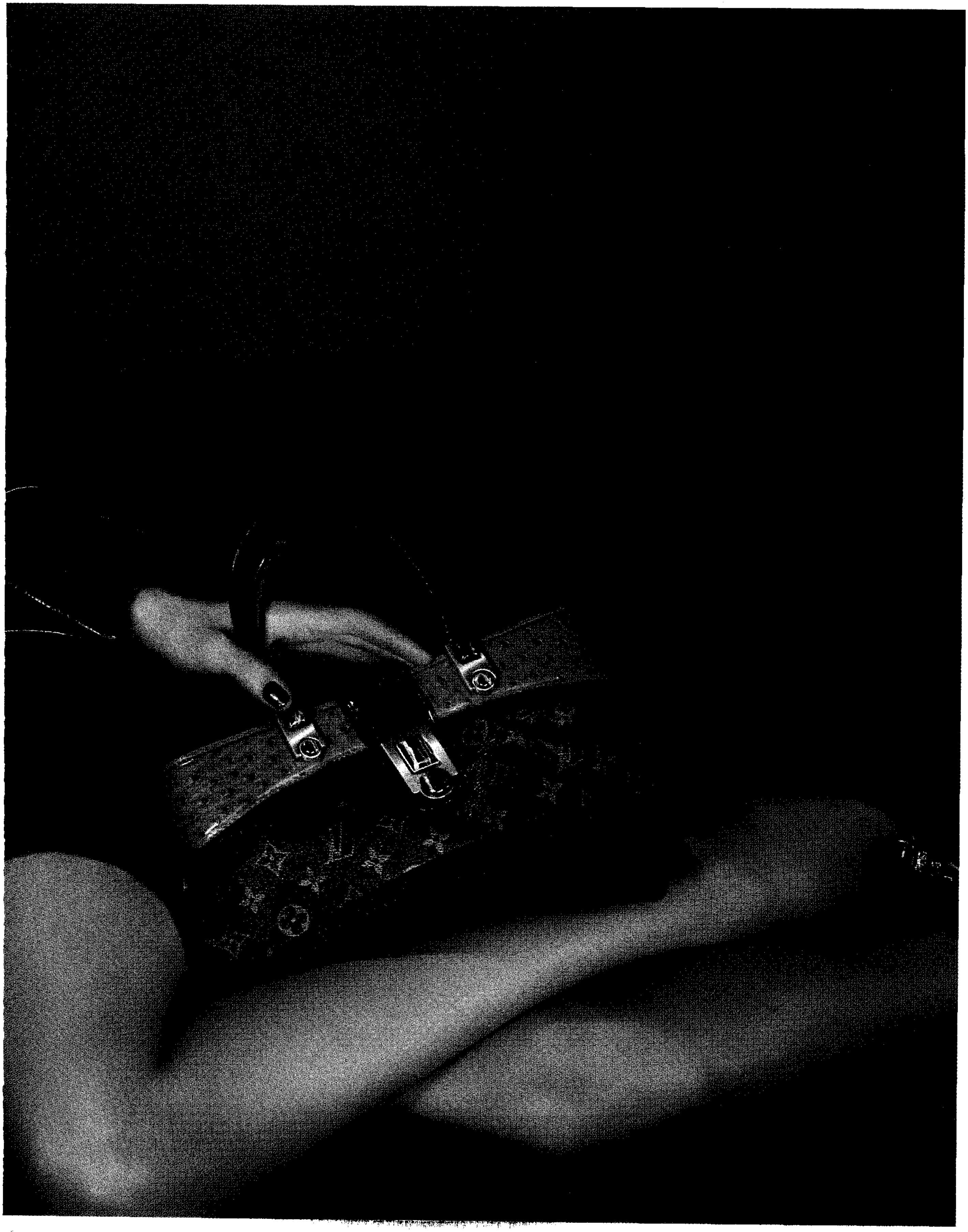

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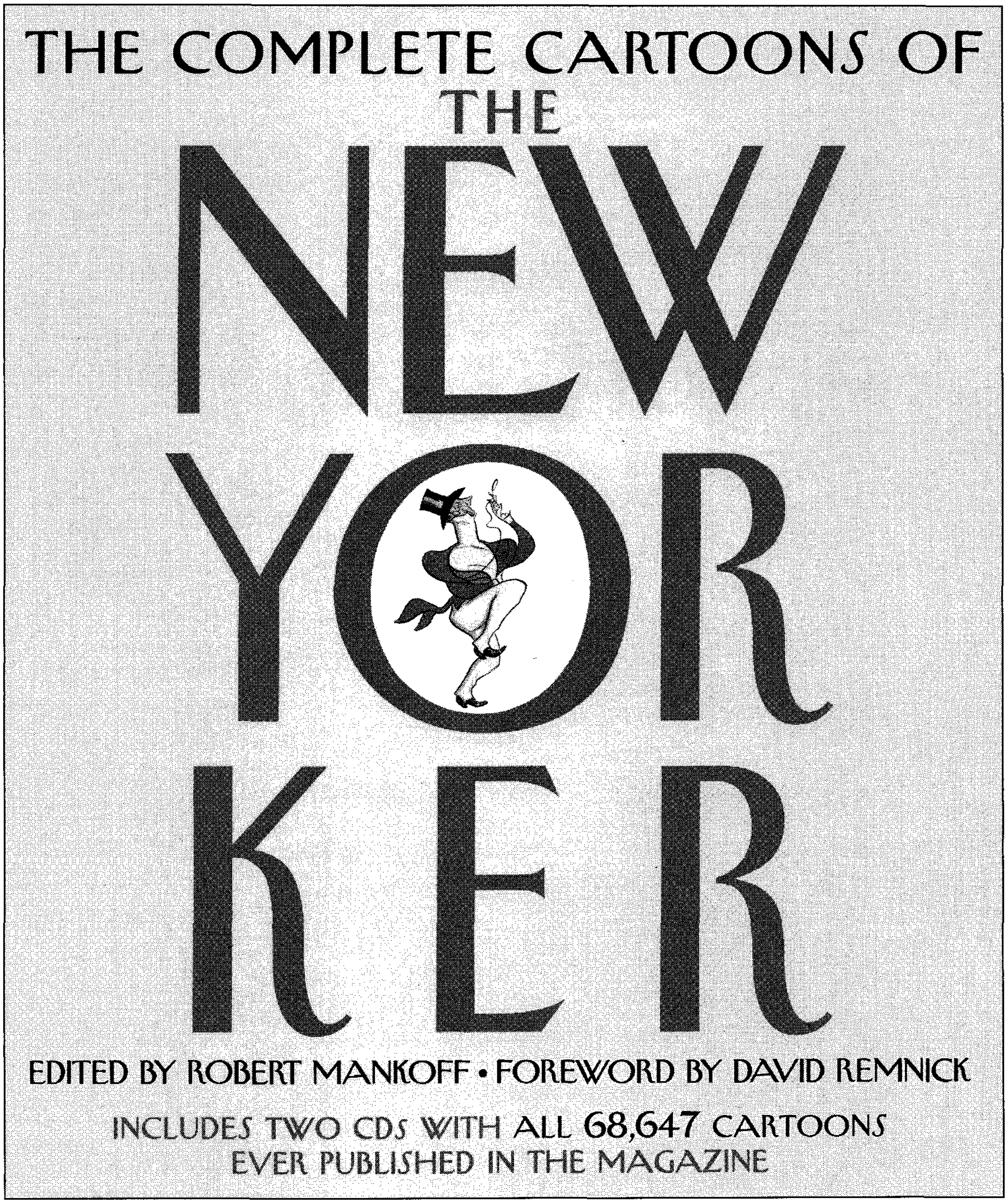

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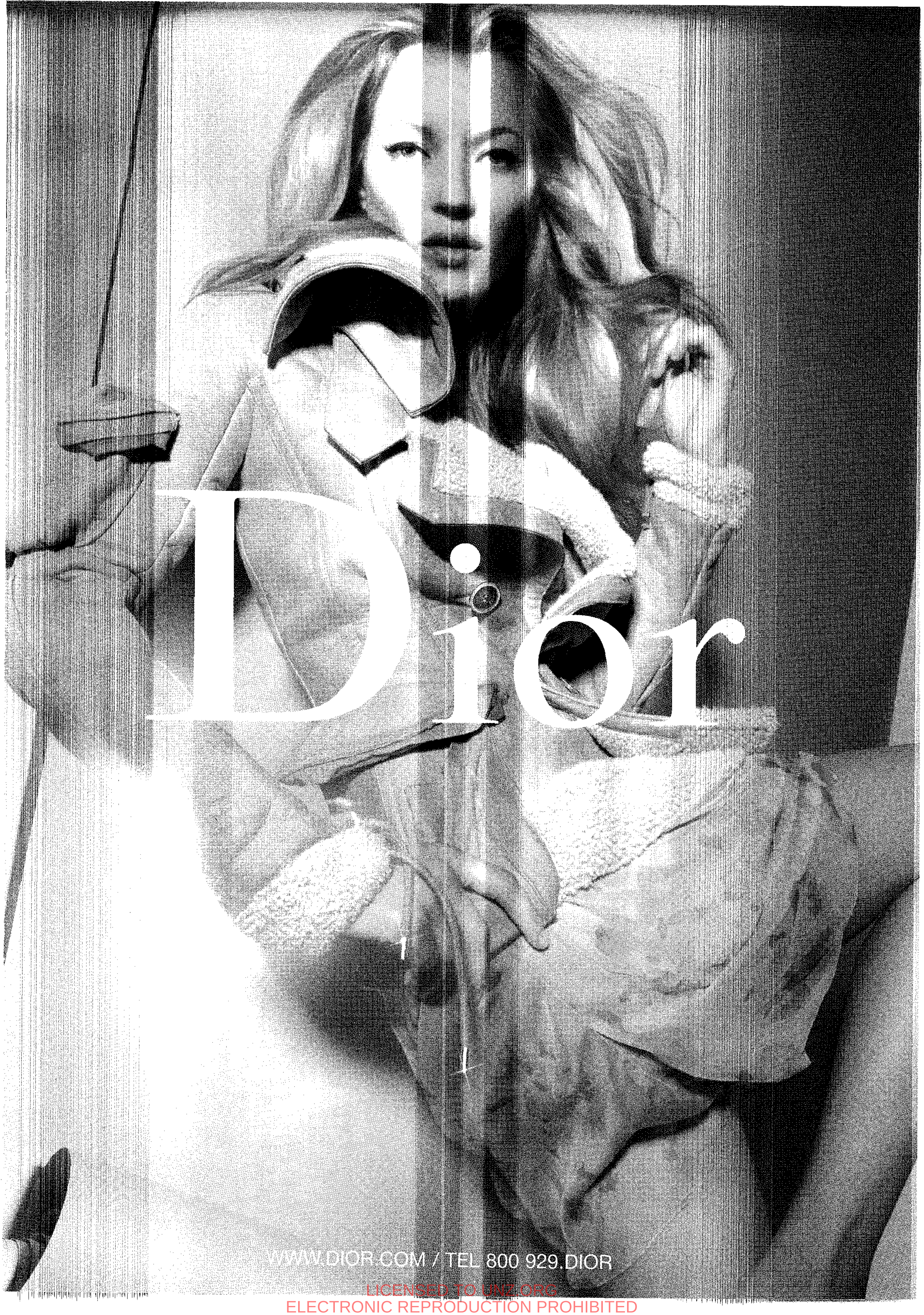
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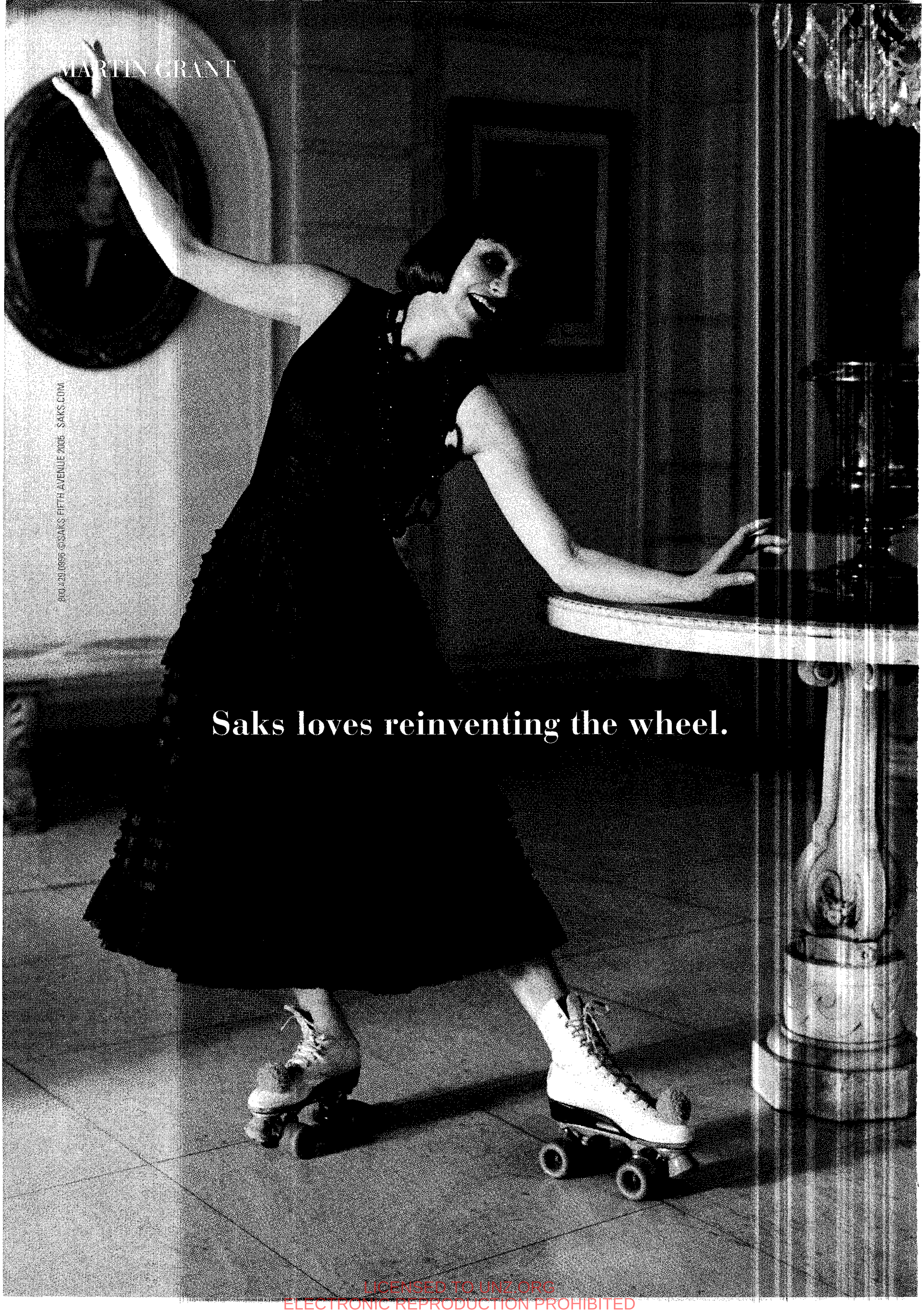
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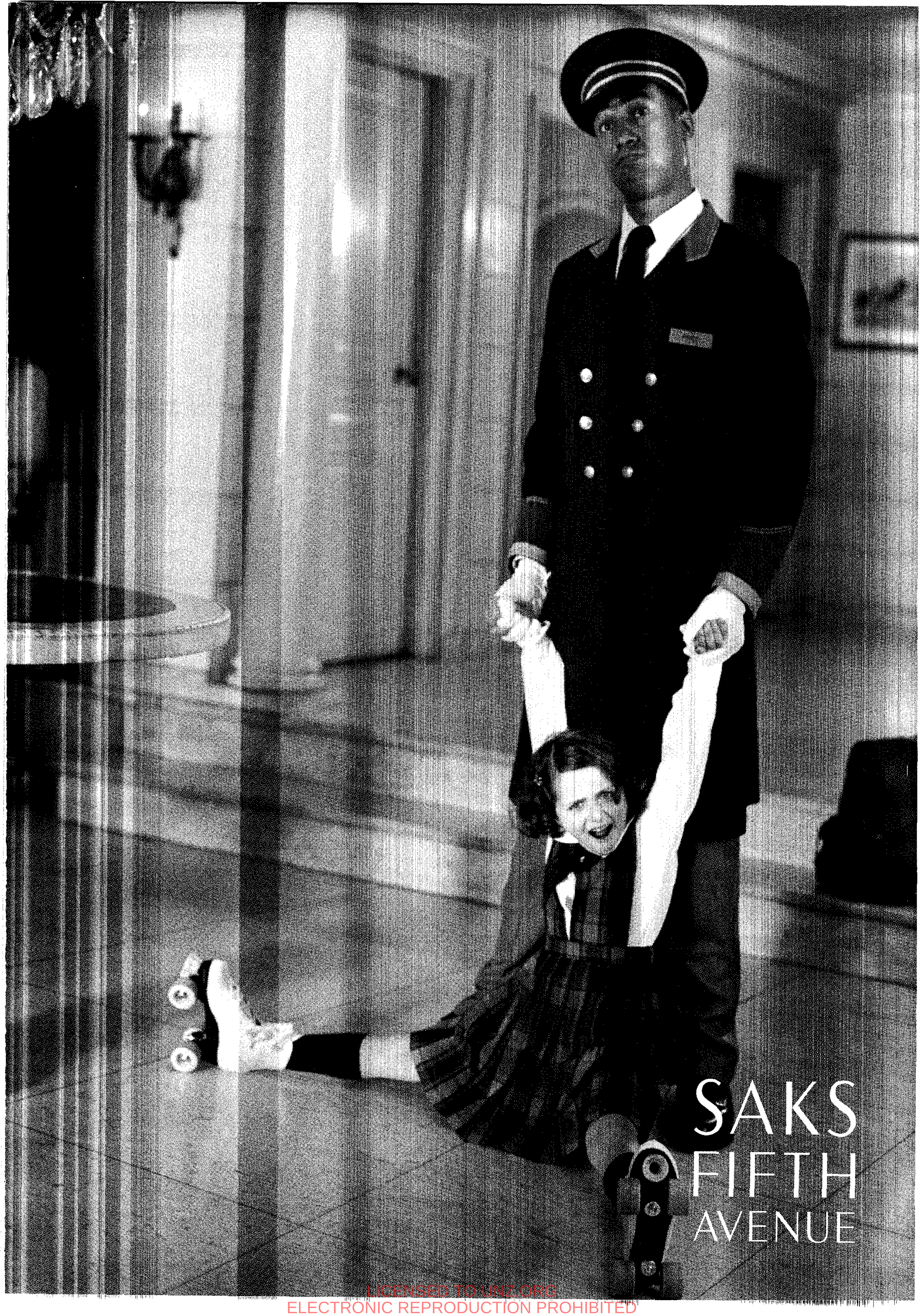
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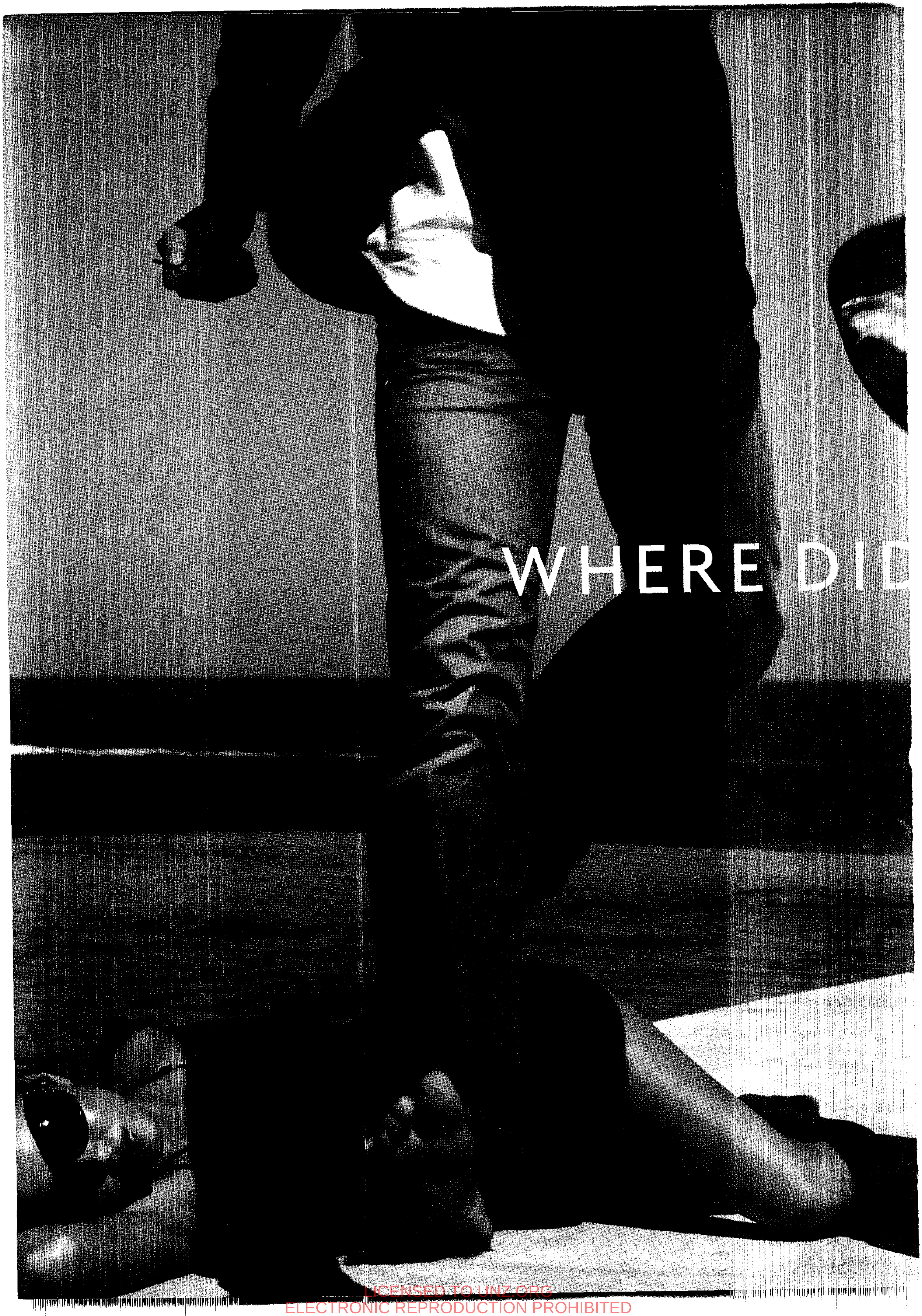
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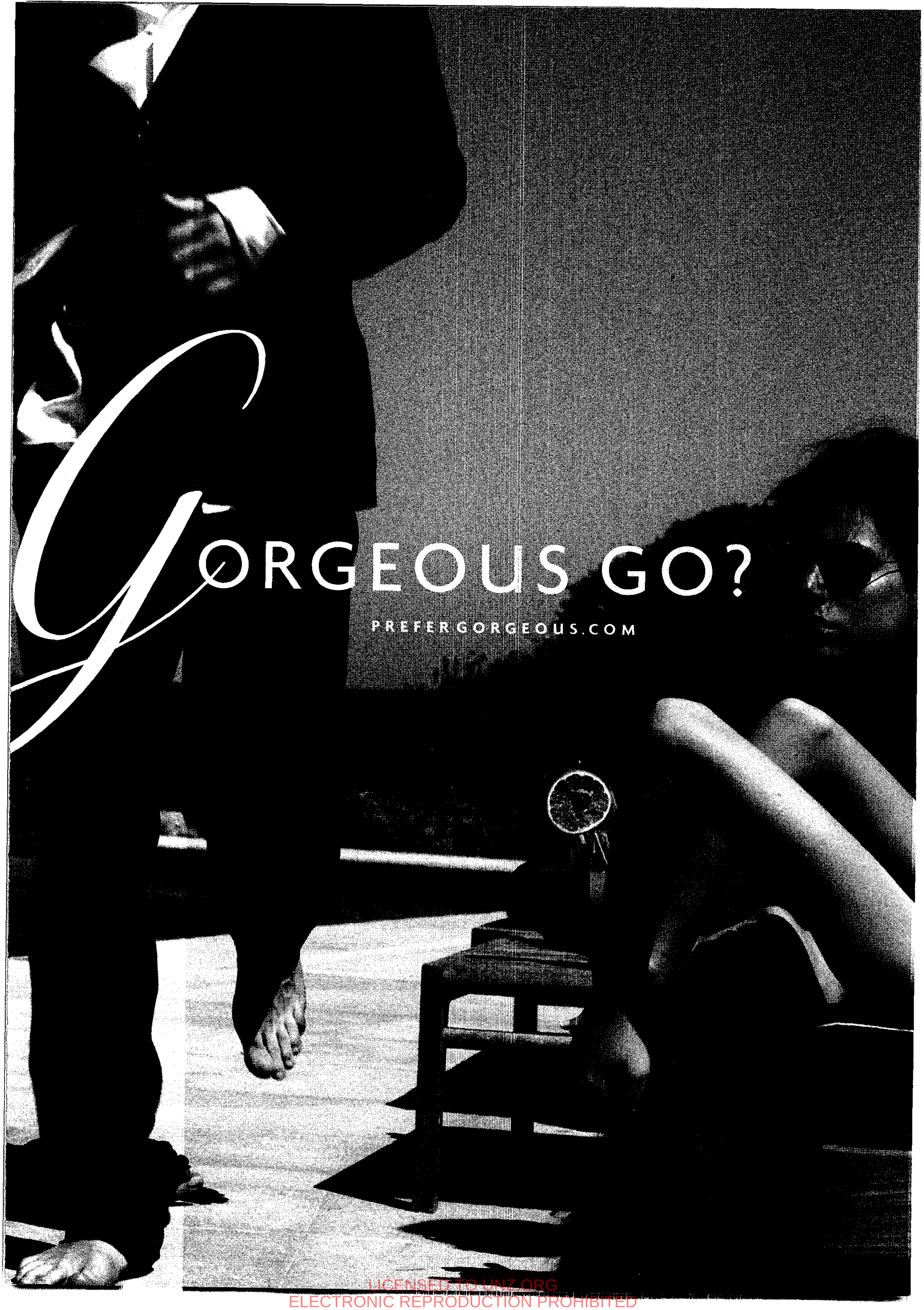
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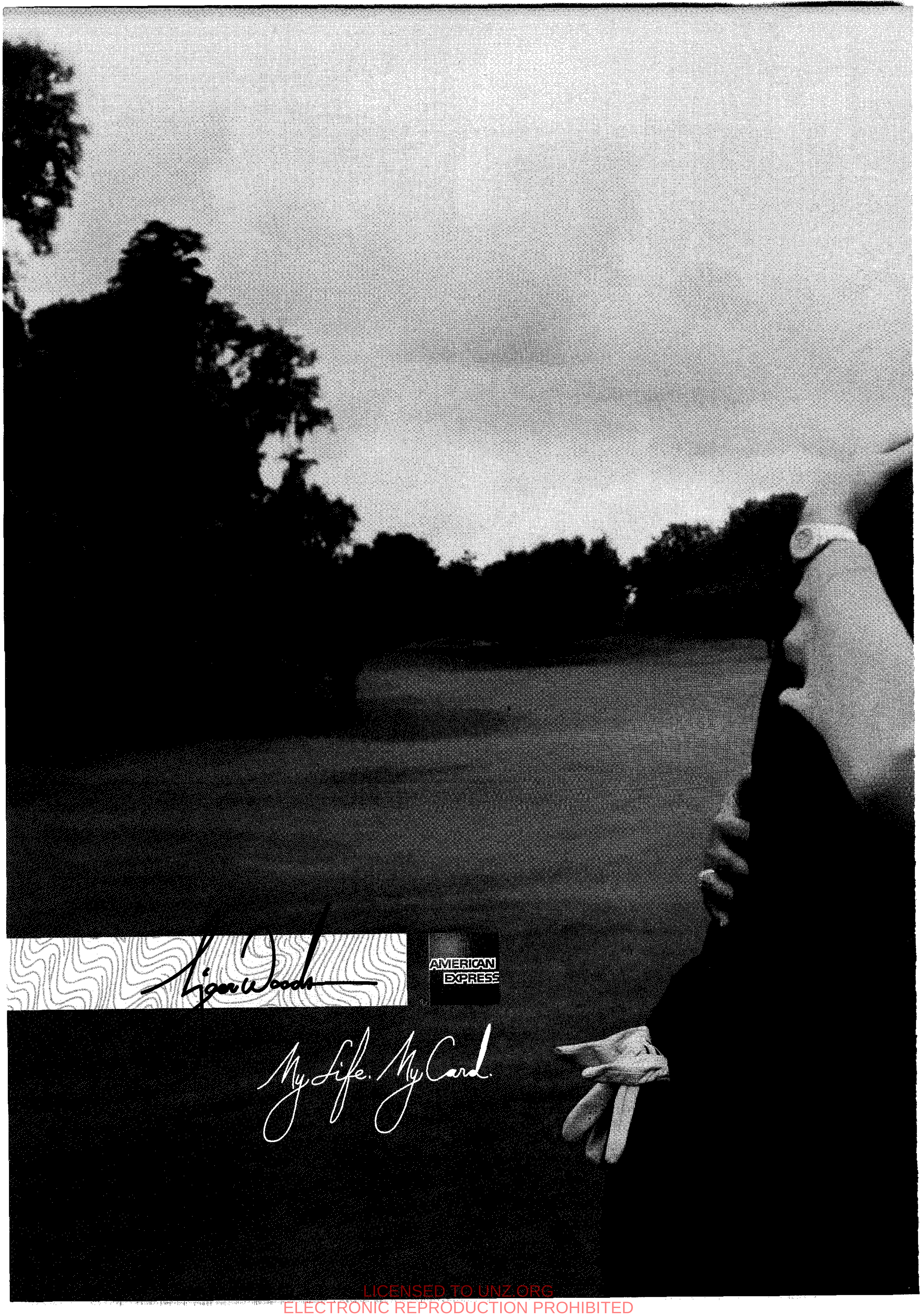
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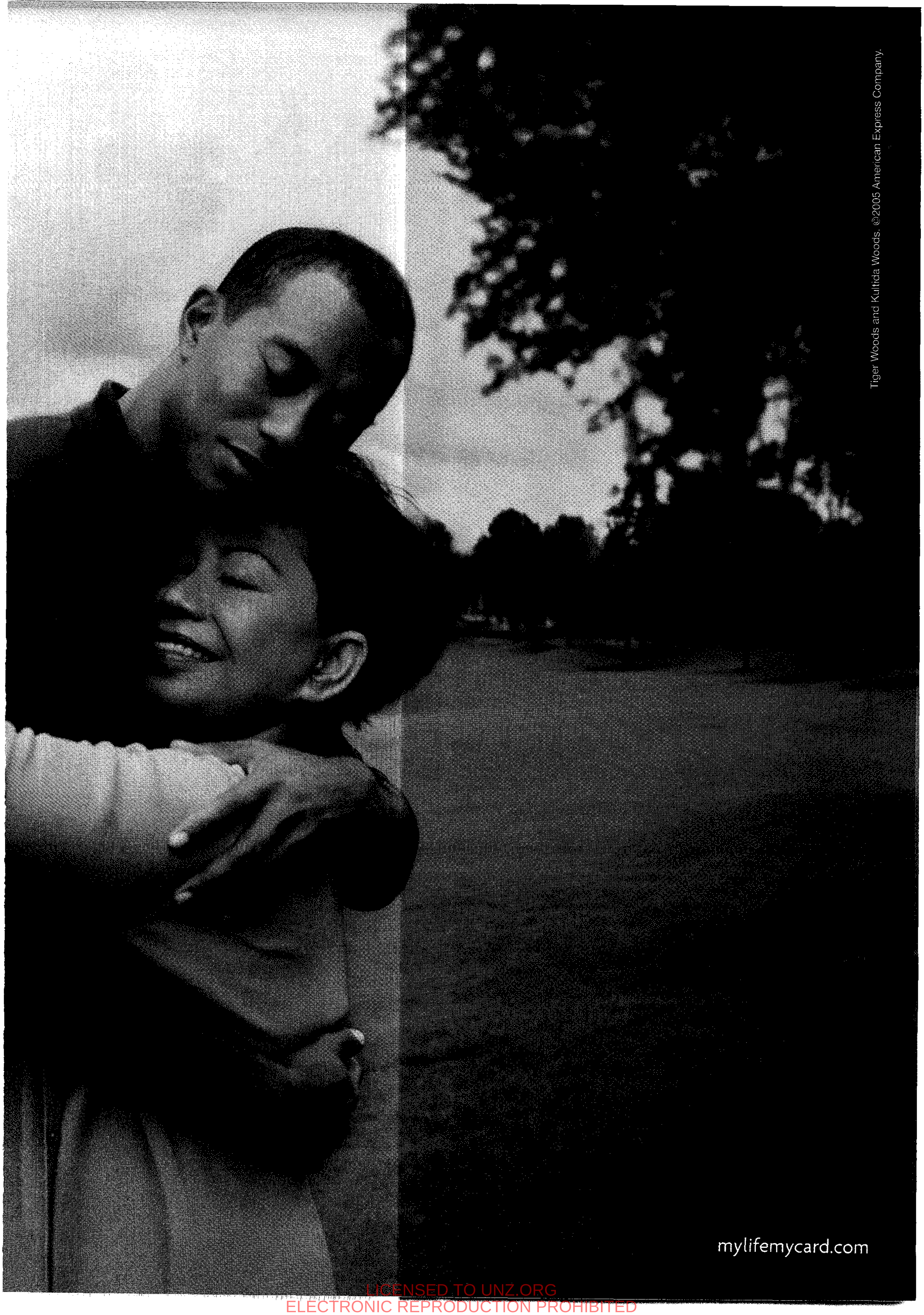
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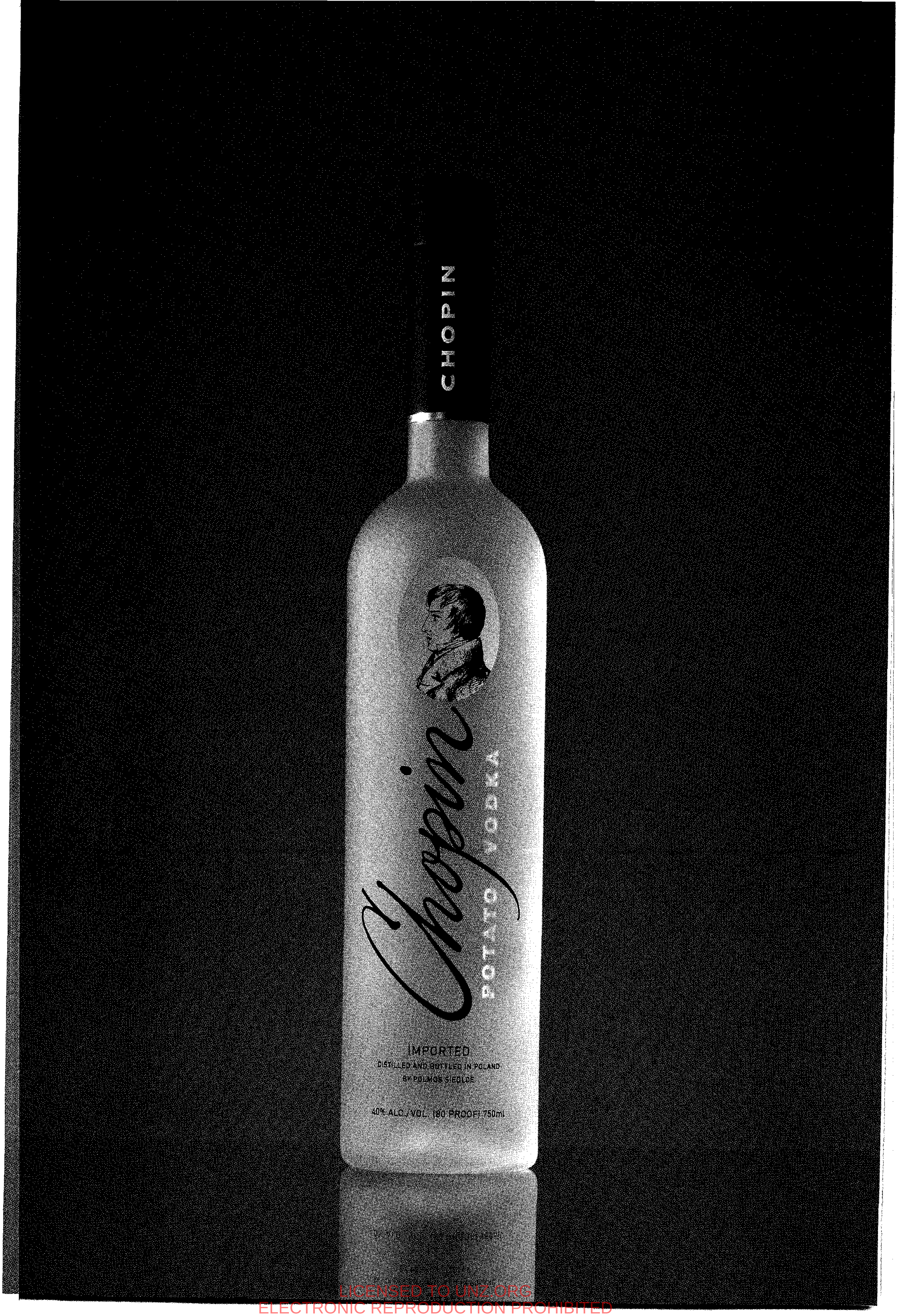
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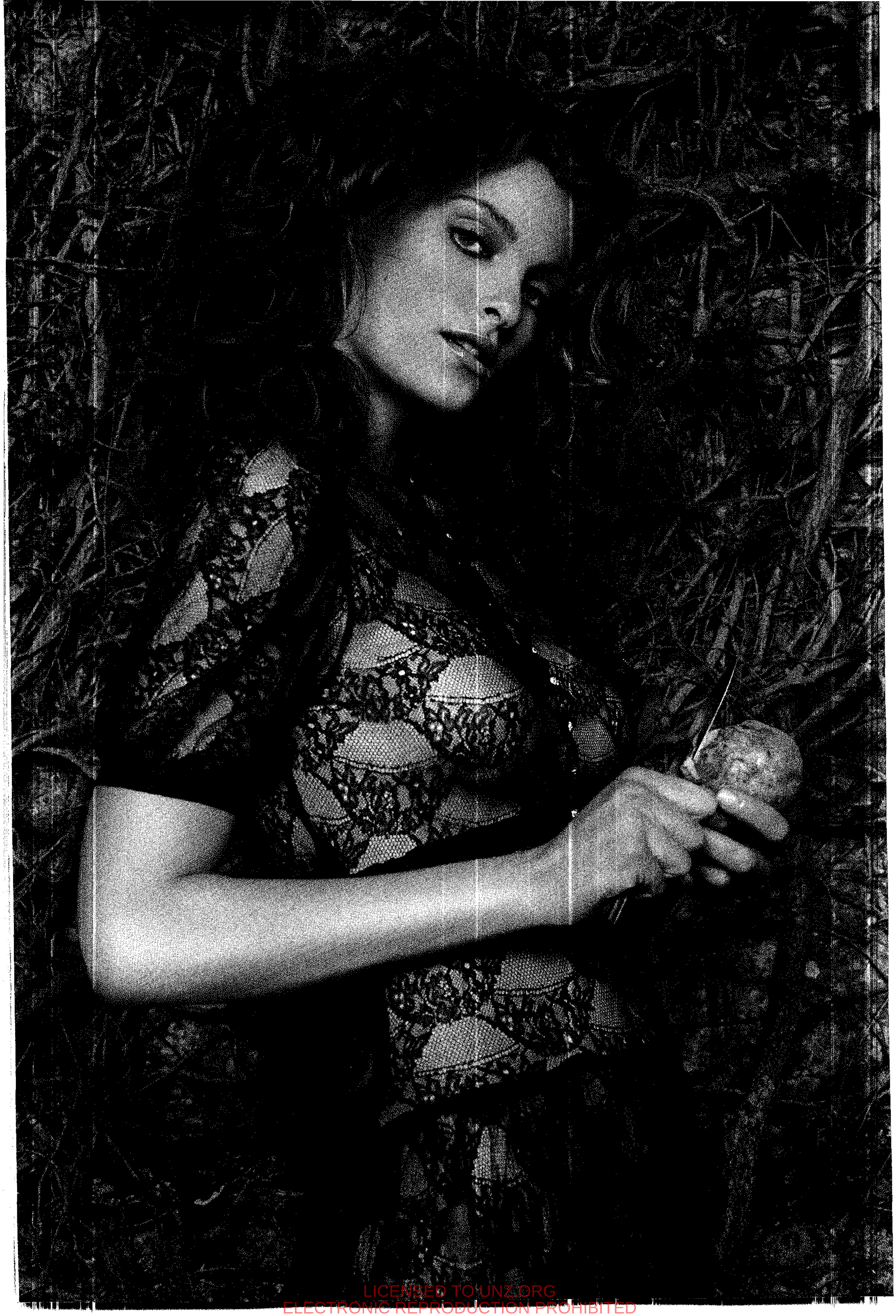

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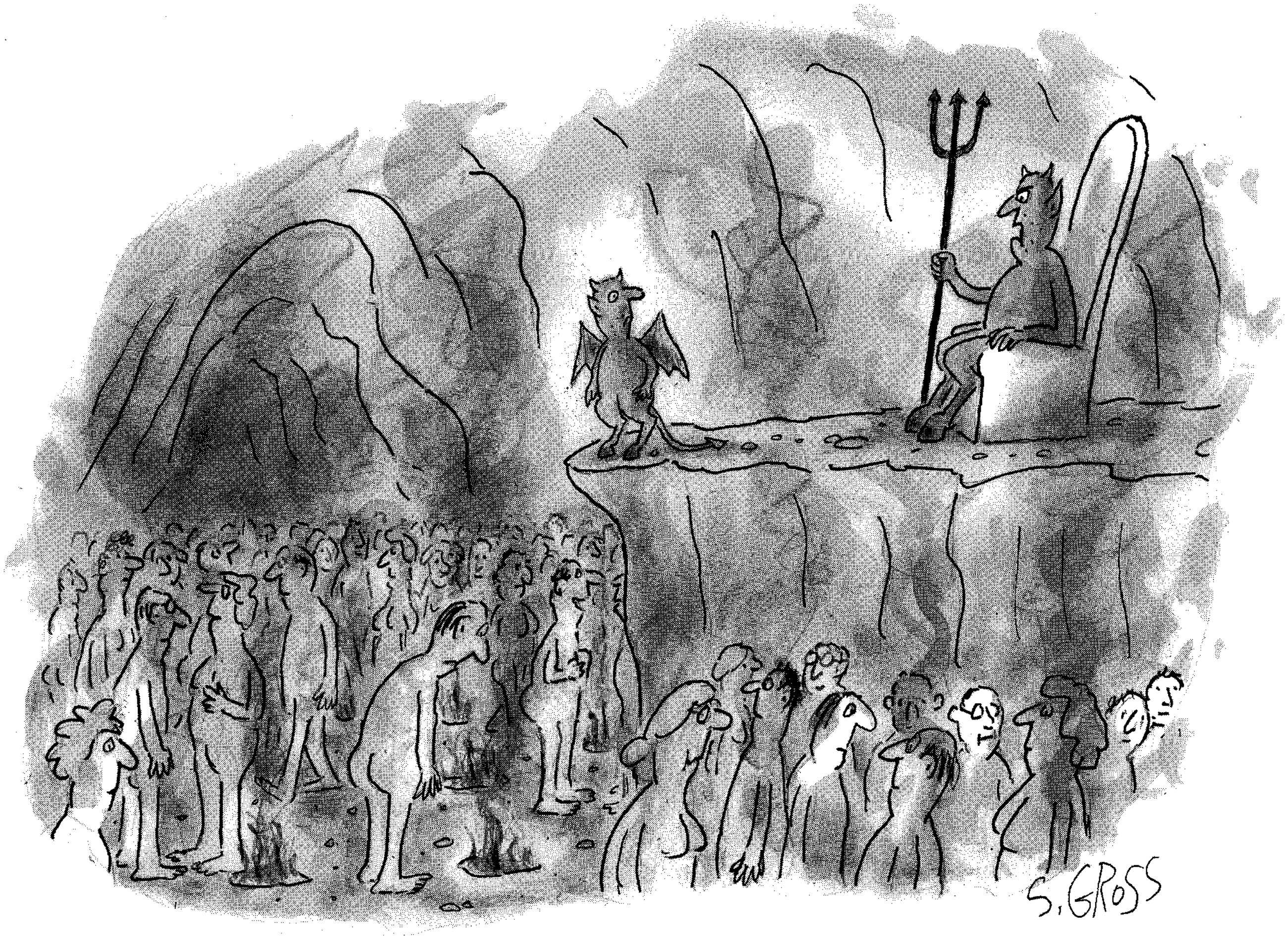

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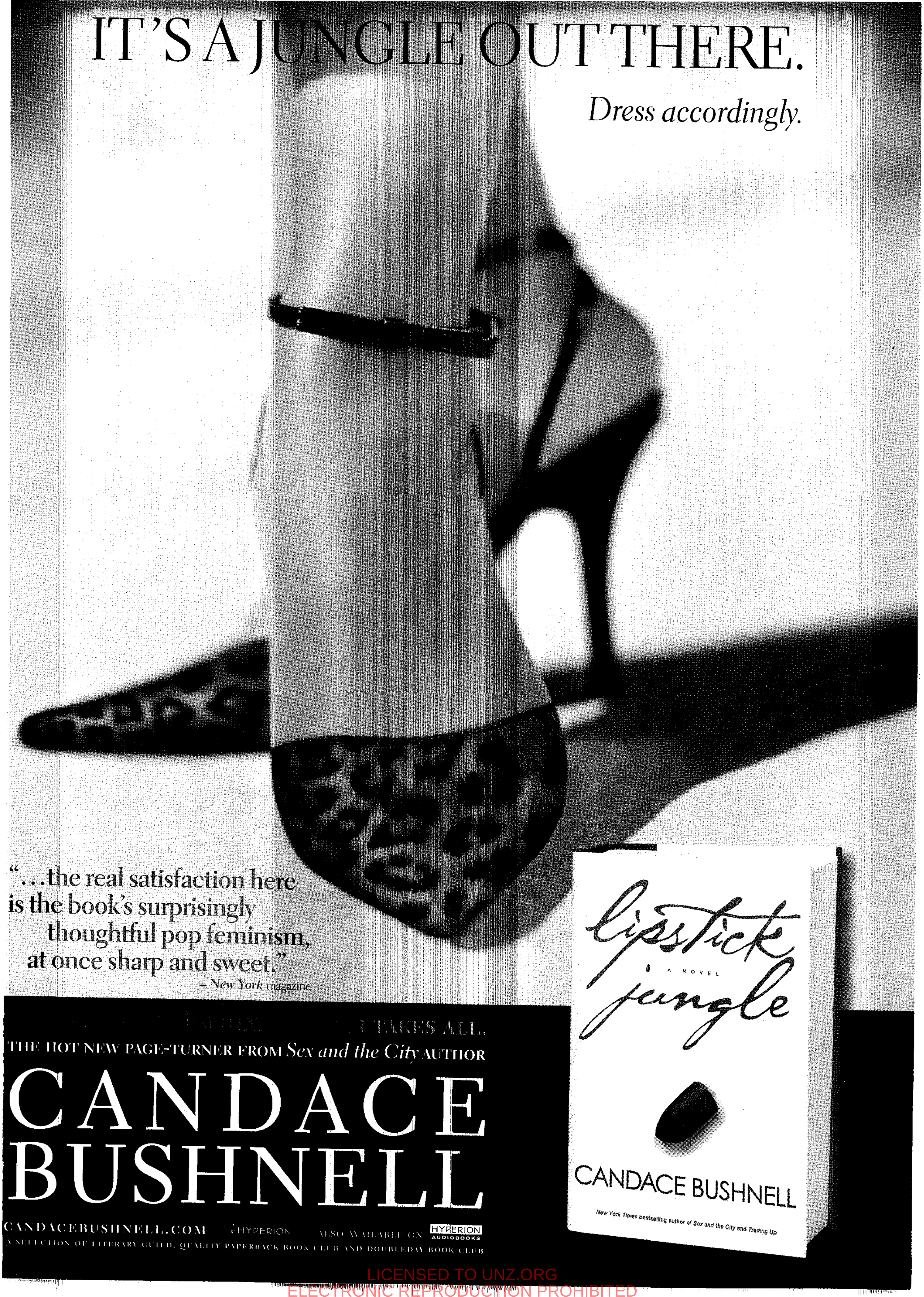

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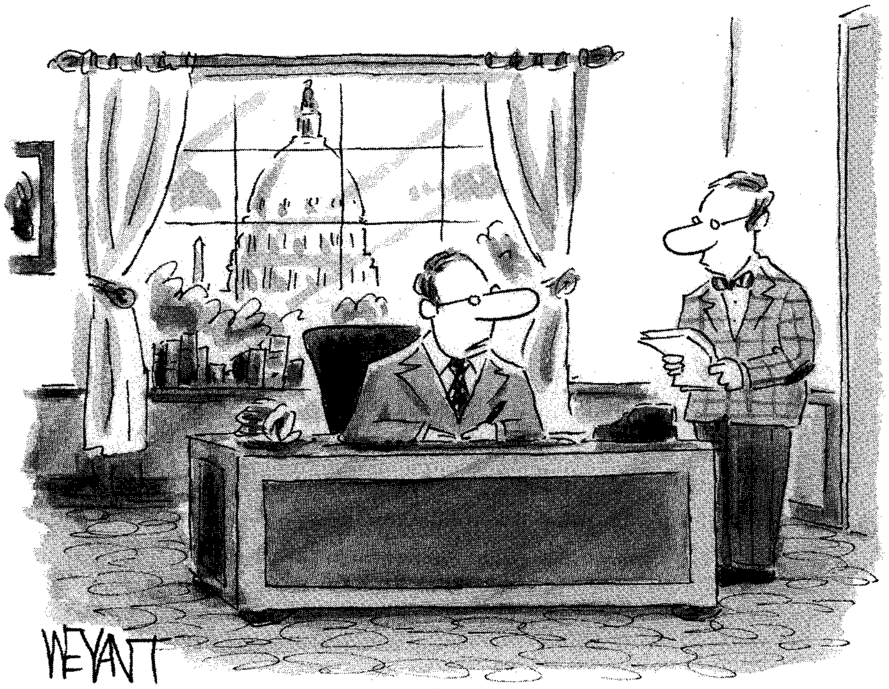
Haruki Murakami (Fiction, p. 110) has published more than ten novels, including "Kafka on the Shore."

Pierre Le-Tan (Sketchbook, p. 136) has contributed covers and illustrations to the magazine since 1968.

Louis Menand (Books, p. 140) is a staff writer.

Nancy Franklin (On Television, p. 156) is the magazine's television critic. ♦



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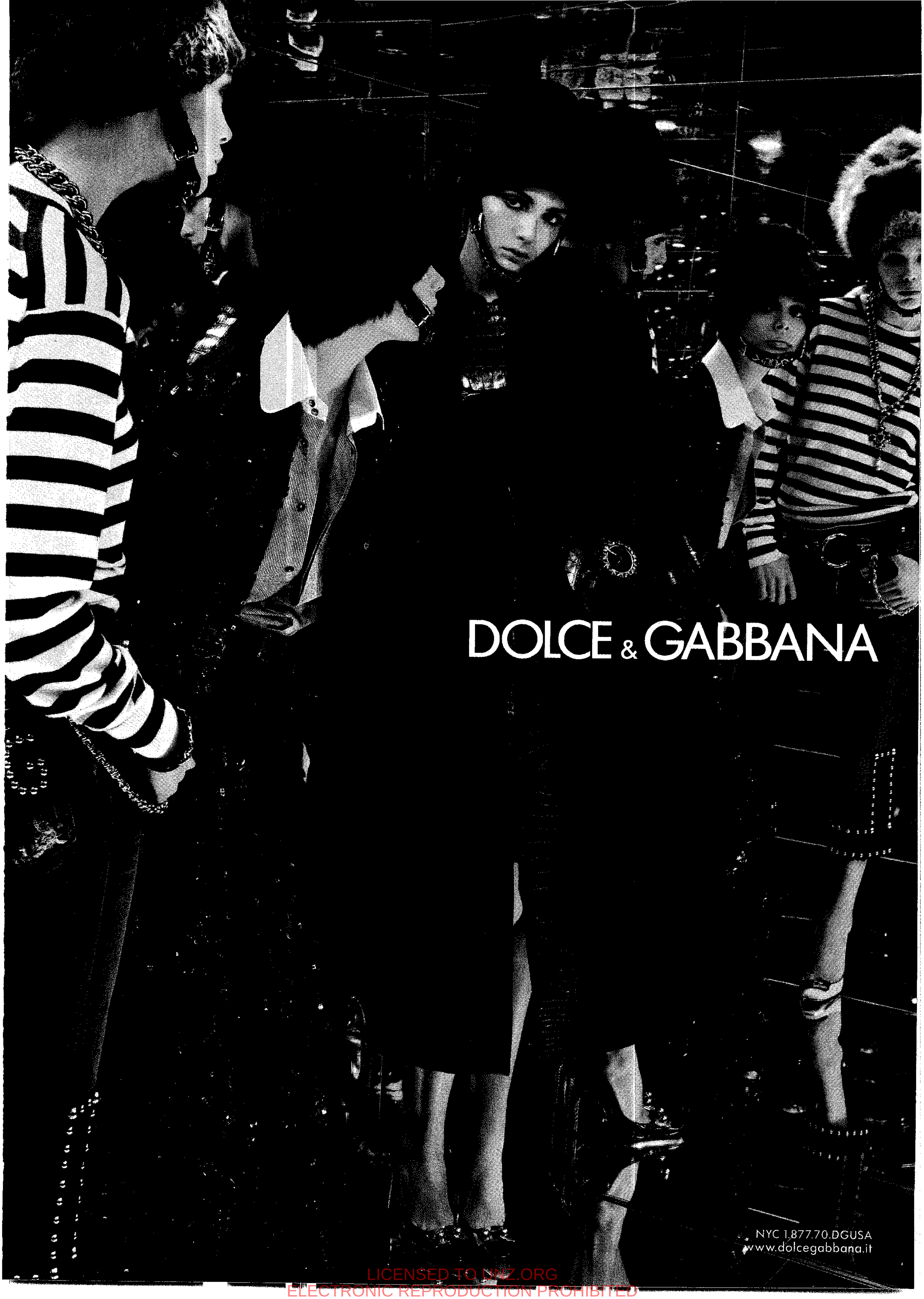
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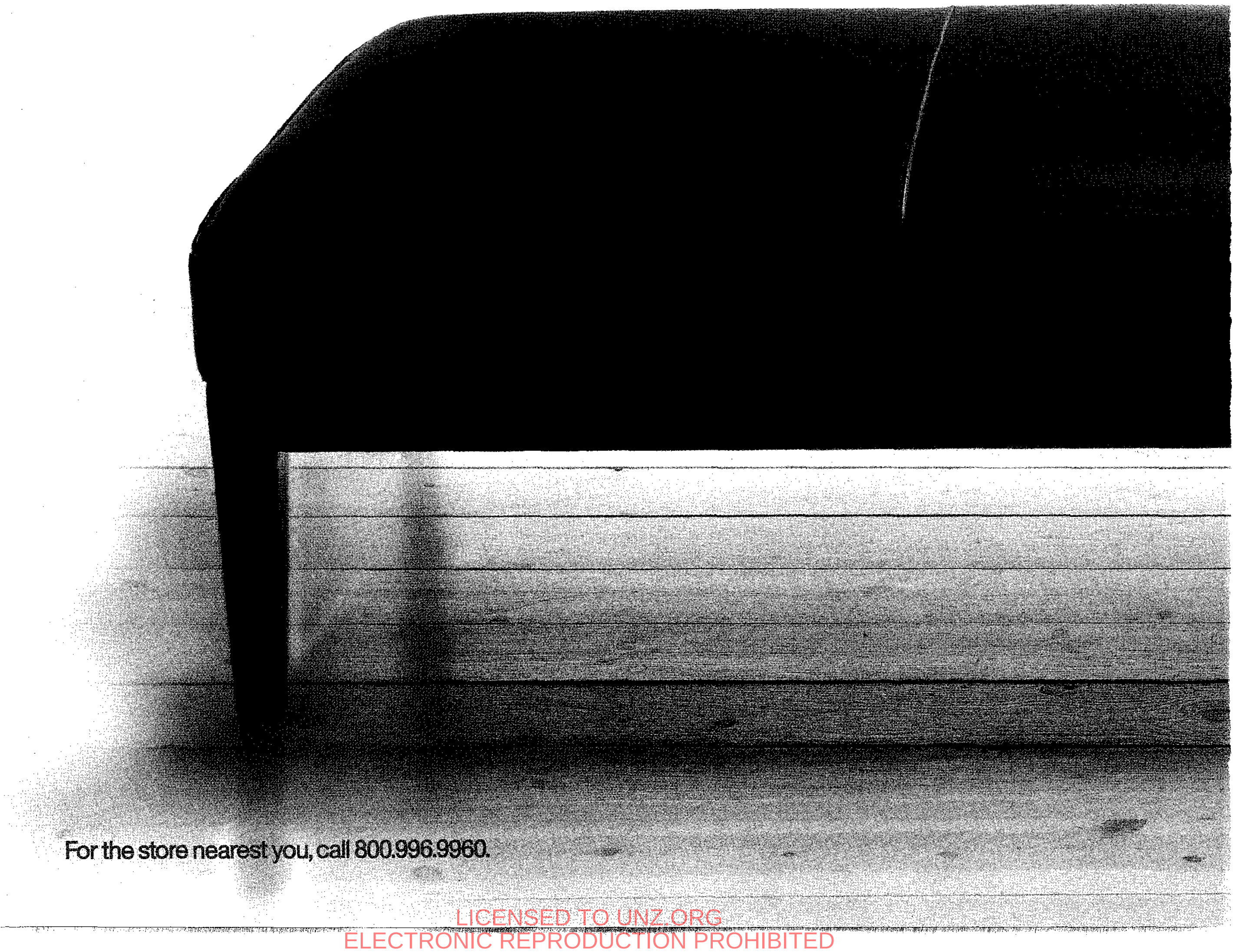

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HEALTH-CARE HAZARDS

Malcolm Gladwell, in his discussion of my argument concerning moral hazard in health insurance, takes issue with cost sharing in insurance as a tool for public policy ("The Moral Hazard Myth," August 29th). Anyone reading the article might be led to conclude that, when I wrote about the concept in 1968, I somehow intended to provide a justification for the Health Savings Account (H.S.A.) plans passed into law in 2004. In fact, the first application of the concept (and the one I had in mind) was a critique of the overly generous insurance coverage that (then and now) the healthy upper-middle class obtains. Early work by Martin Feldstein and others showed that this excessive coverage was fuelled by the tax subsidy to employment-based health insurance (now with a price tag of about two hundred billion dollars). It induced mostly better-off people to buy insurance that paid for and encouraged the use of more, and much more costly, medical care. For low-income people, advocates of H.S.A.s can point to early data that shows that the small but not negligible number of lower-income people enrolled in such plans were not those who dropped more generous coverage (which even fewer of them had to begin with) but, rather, those who were formerly uninsured. Even though I strongly believe that a high-deductible plan is not the right design for a low-income person, I do think it is better than nothing. Cost sharing needs to be used carefully, but moral hazard is not a myth. The real myth is that wise use of this important tool is somehow dangerous.

Mark V. Pauly
Bendheim Professor of Health Care Systems and Economics
The Wharton School
Philadelphia, Pa.

I applaud Malcolm Gladwell's argument that Health Savings Accounts are a dangerous step away from the traditional idea of social insurance, in which society benefits from the many healthy helping to fund the expenses of the few sick. For the last three years, I have been the editor of a trade publication for the health-insurance industry (one of the most profitable sectors of the U.S. economy over that time) and have been perplexed, and ultimately enraged, by the way in which insurers and policymakers are trumpeting H.S.A.s. Proponents claim that all Americans will benefit from being able to save pretax dollars in H.S.A.s. But nonpartisan research shows that middle-income and poor Americans who spend their H.S.A. funds on health care—that is, people who actually use H.S.A.s as they are ostensibly intended—will reap little to no tax advantages from them, mainly because their funds will be spent down every year. Meanwhile, wealthy Americans who use H.S.A.s as a handy new way to put away large amounts of money tax free rather than spending these funds on health care will benefit greatly, both from the tax savings and from the accounts' appreciation over time. At best, H.S.A.s seem to be the well-intentioned but misguided products of conservative policymakers who simply cannot fathom the experience of poor Americans. At worst, H.S.A.s may be yet another way for the Bush Administration to ease the lives of those Americans who already have good health, and healthy portfolios, by deliberately undermining a system that has traditionally benefitted the less well off.

Tom Mullen
Washington, D.C.

BLOOD LUST

As, presumably, the only resident leech biologist in New York City, I read John Colapinto's account of Roy Sawyer's career in the leech business with some interest ("Bloodsuckers," July 25th). Sawyer was an inspiration when I was a bright-eyed student. However, he has been semi-retired for a number of years, as Colapinto notes, and hirudinologists have made interesting progress in the leech field since then. Some points in the article need clarification. The European medicinal leech is not the only species "considered suitable for medicinal purposes." *Aliolimnatis michaelseni* sees use in South Africa, and the Philippine leech *Hirudinaria manillensis* was once so prized that it has been accidentally introduced throughout other one-time Spanish territories (we recently found this invasive species in Puerto Rico in abundance). Despite Roy Sawyer's insistence, definitive scientific evidence that leeches have an anesthetic in their saliva has yet to emerge; indeed, the work of Meir Rigbi indicated otherwise. A leech bite is relatively painless probably because, like a razor, it makes a clean cut that only marginally elicits pain receptors in the skin. Finally, the characterization of a leech as "a dirty needle—that can walk" is an unfortunate one. While caution is always advisable, research by Heinz Mehlhorn and his colleagues determined that H.I.V., for example, is rapidly inactivated in the leech's gut. A straightforward explanation of why medicinal leeches are poor vectors of mammalian parasites is that, contrary to what Colapinto writes, they do not normally "subsist on the blood of mammals" (there are relatively few aquatic mammals in Europe or North America) but, rather, show a preference for frogs, salamanders, fishes, and even fish eggs. Still, the resident bacterium (not "a digestive enzyme") in medicinal leeches, *Aeromonas veronii*, can infect wounds if the leech is caused to regurgitate, for example by pulling, burning, salting, or otherwise insulting the leech. If readers are ever so lucky to find themselves the focus of attention by a medicinal leech, I would recommend that they let it finish undisturbed and go on its merry way.

Dr. Mark E. Siddall
Curator of Leeches and Protozoa
American Museum of Natural History
New York City

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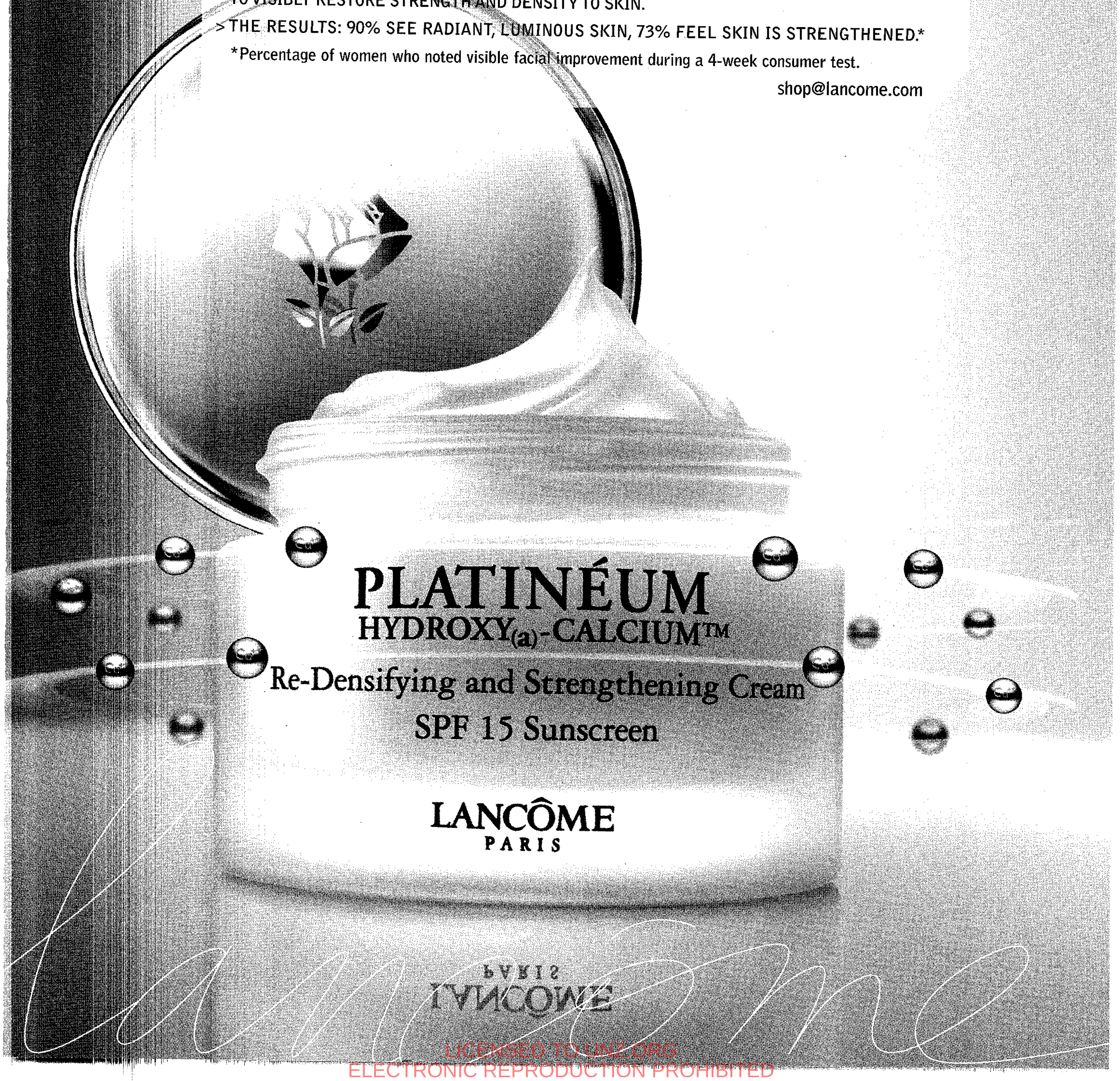
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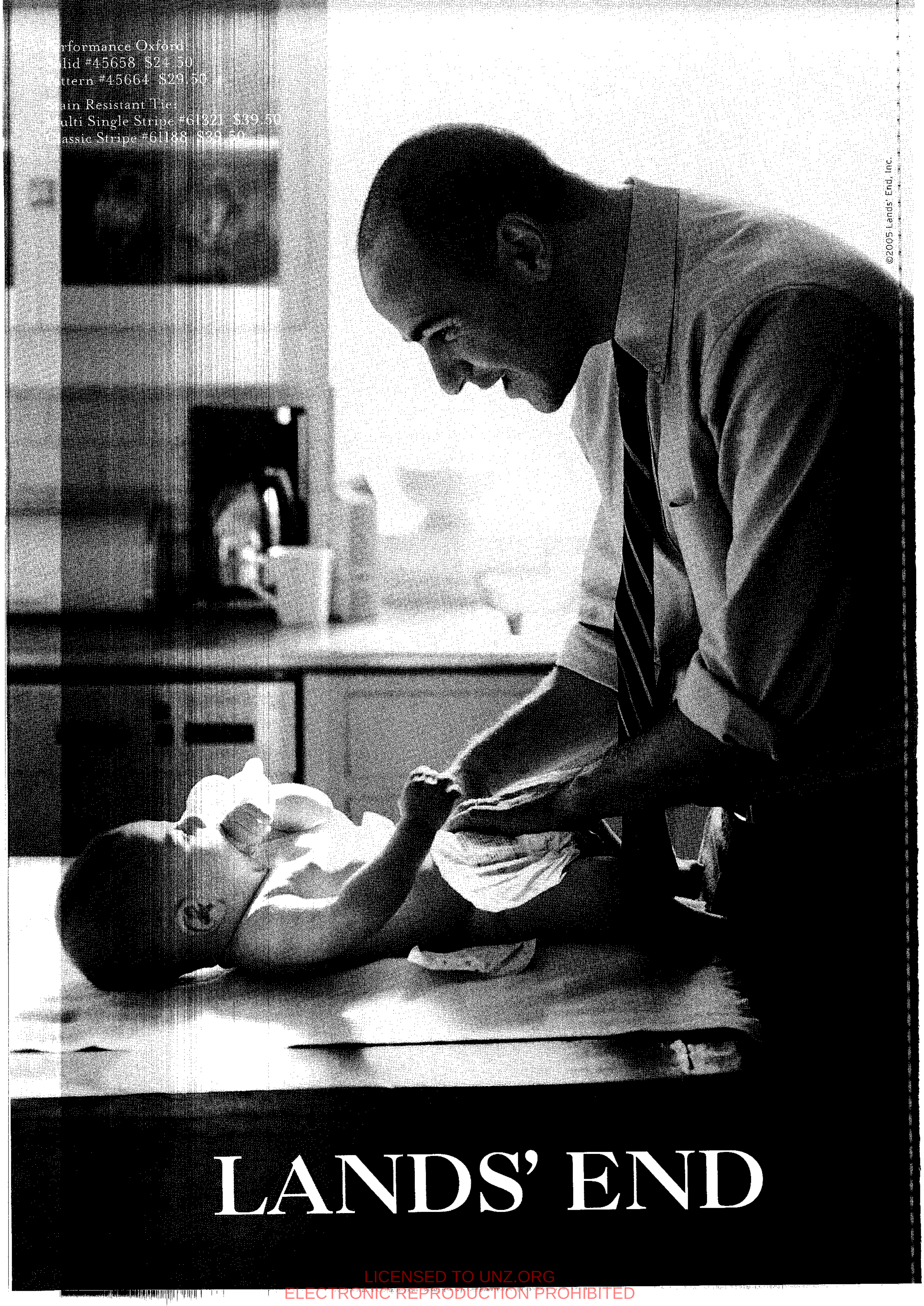

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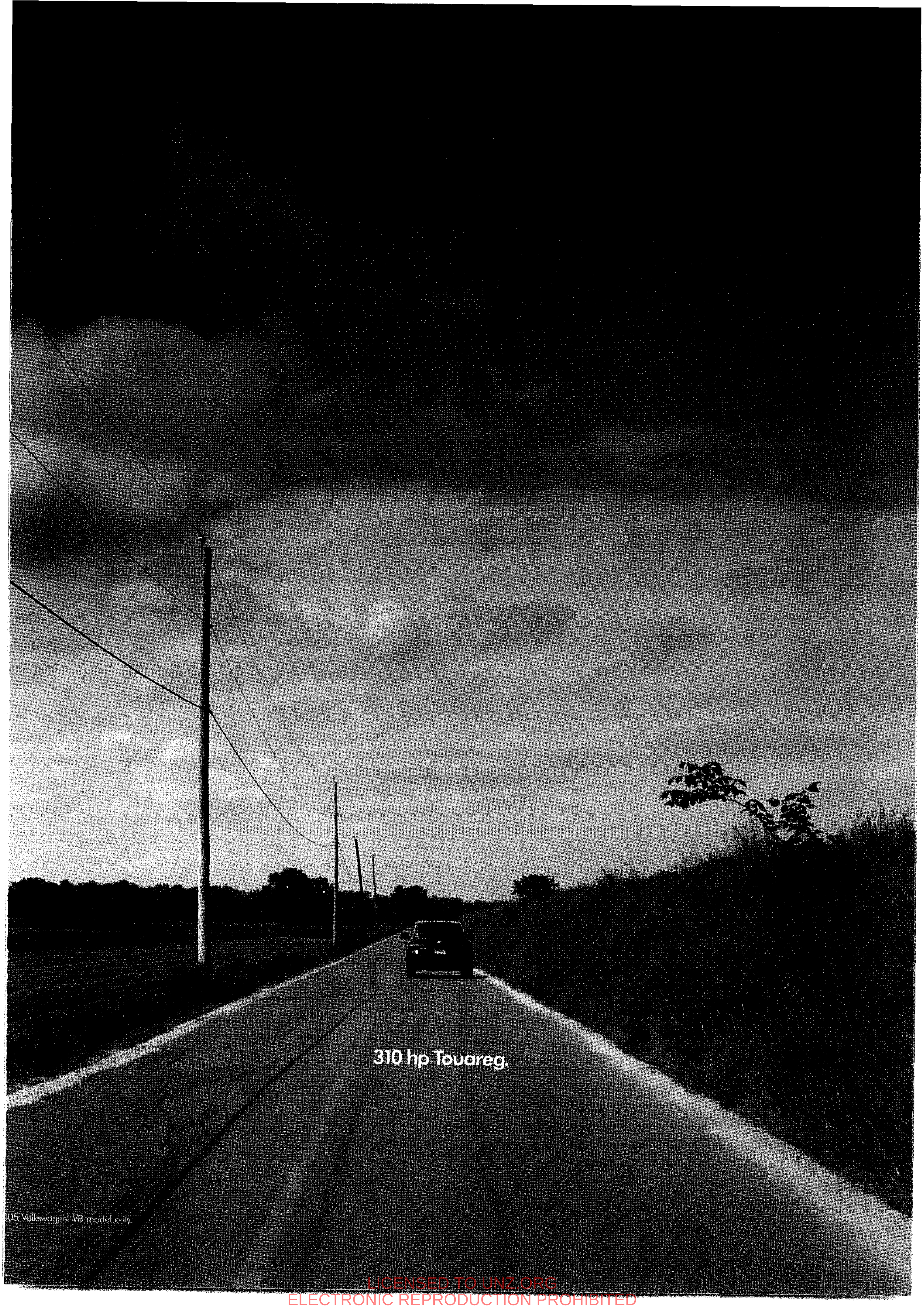
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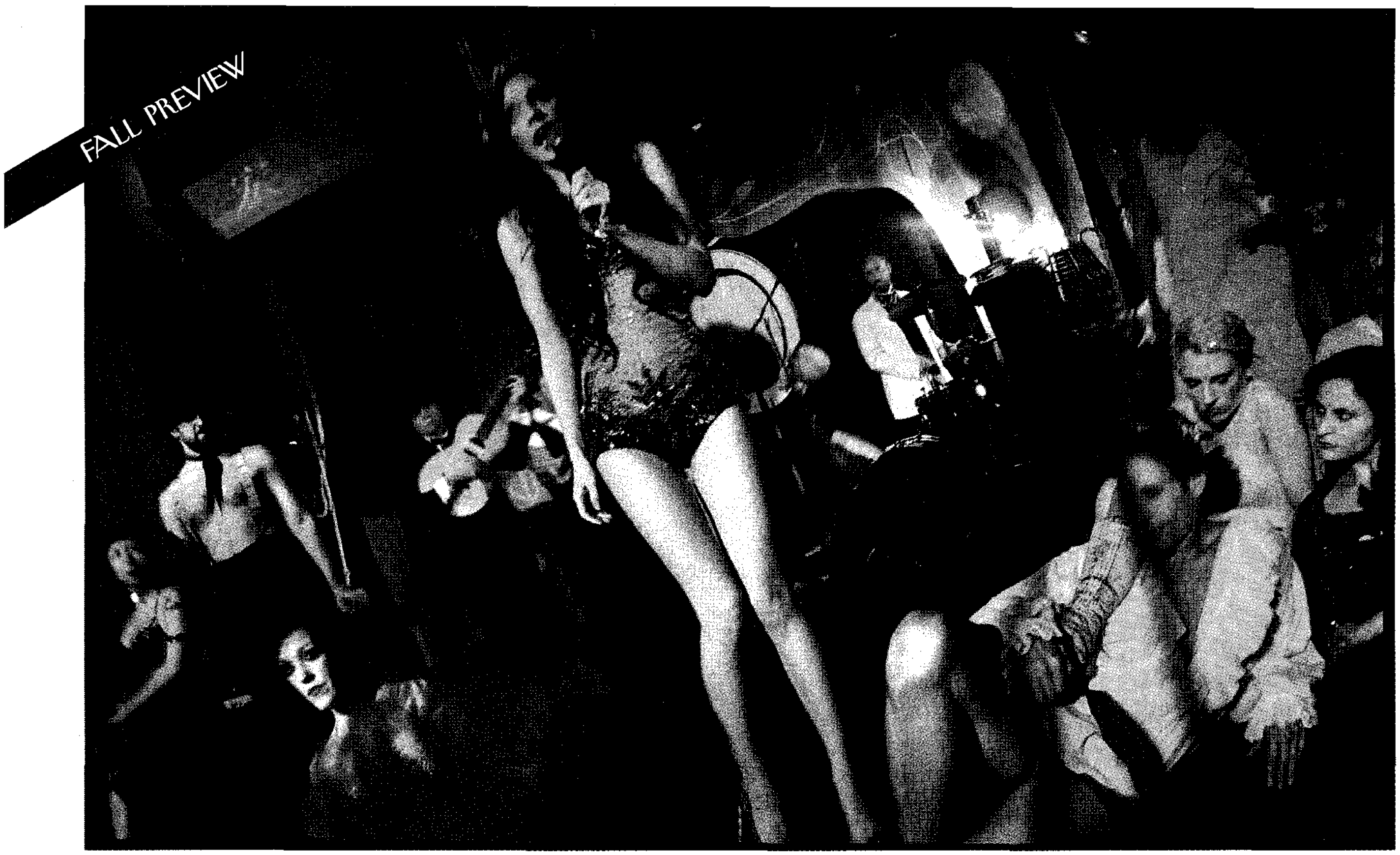

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

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THIS WEEK

THE THEATRE
LIFE IN THE BIG CITY

In "Walking Down Broadway," Dawn Powell's unproduced play from 1931, now staged by the Mint Theatre, two girls from Ohio move to New York and soon learn to scale down their optimism. Opens Sept. 25. (See page 36.)

NIGHT LIFE
THE WHITE STRIPES

"Get Behind Me Satan," the latest album by the Detroit duo of Meg and Jack White, was released in June, but New York audiences have yet to see the band perform the material live. This week, the White Stripes come to Keyspan Park in Coney Island. (See page 39.)

ART
LE WITT ON PAPER

Sol LeWitt's "Horizontal Lines, Black on Color," a series of dense gouache-on-paper works made in 2005, exemplifies a lush subset of the artist's practice that is often forgotten—his hard-edged geometric studies have usually garnered more notice—but is well worth a look. The works will be on display at the Paula Cooper gallery through Oct. 15. (See page 46.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
TWO CHOIRS

The Choir of Clare College, one of the great chapel choirs of Cambridge University, sings a joint concert with the boys of the St. Thomas Choir at the magnificent Fifth Avenue church. (See page 53.)

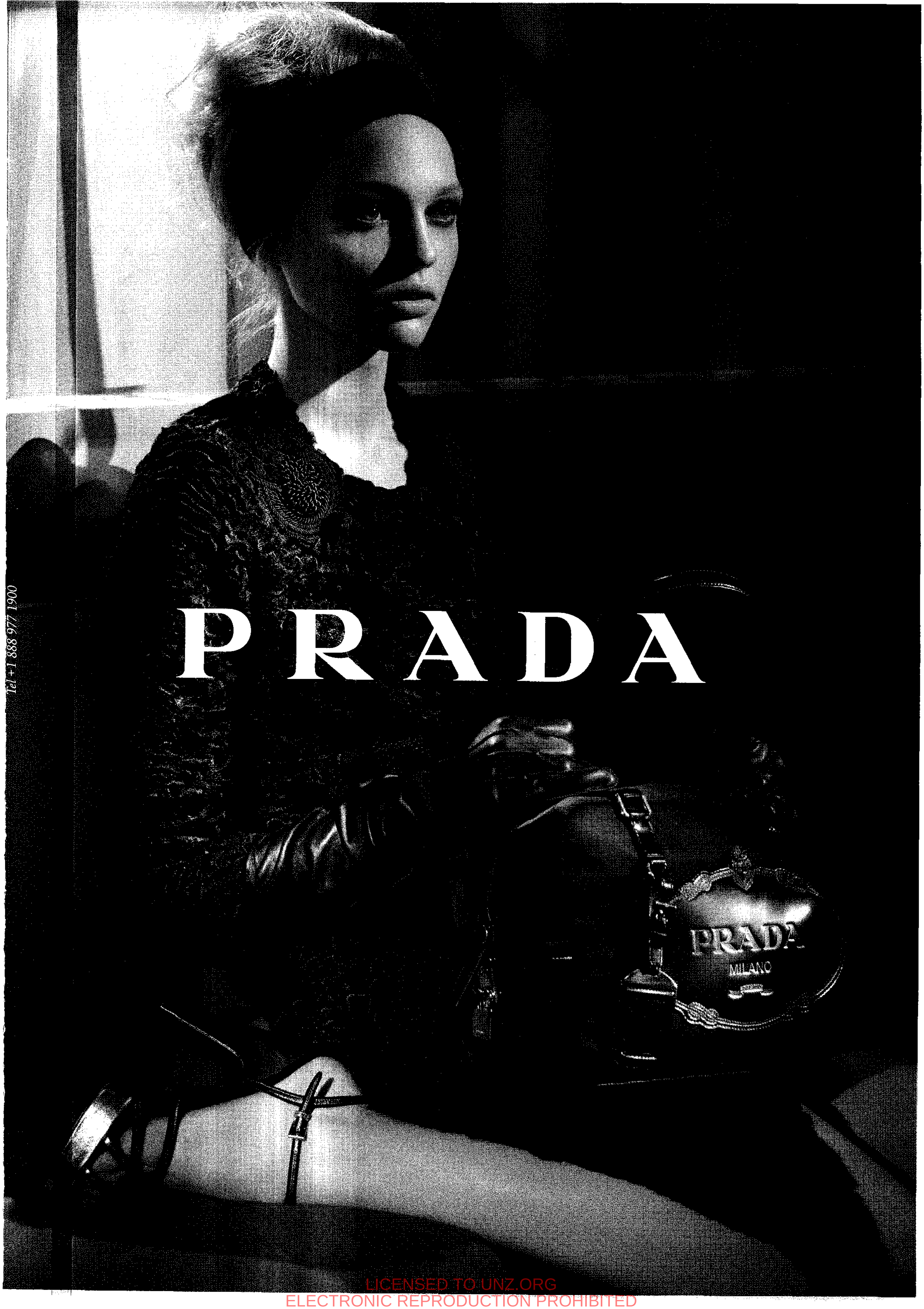
MOVIES
TOKYO STORIES

The New York Film Festival begins Sept. 23 and features twenty-four new movies from around the world, along with forty films from the repertory of the Shochiku Company, from Japan, which has been in business since 1895 and has produced works by Yasujiro Ozu, Hou Hsiao-hsien, and Takeshi Kitano, among many others. (See page 62.)

READINGS AND TALKS
OCCUPATION PAINTER

In April of 2003, the New York-based artist Steve Mumford entered Iraq and started painting scenes of everyday life in the war-torn nation. This week, he talks about his watercolors, which have recently been collected in the book "Baghdad Journal." (See page 64.)

The Citizens Band, a local acrobatic and musical troupe. Photograph by Sylvia Plachy.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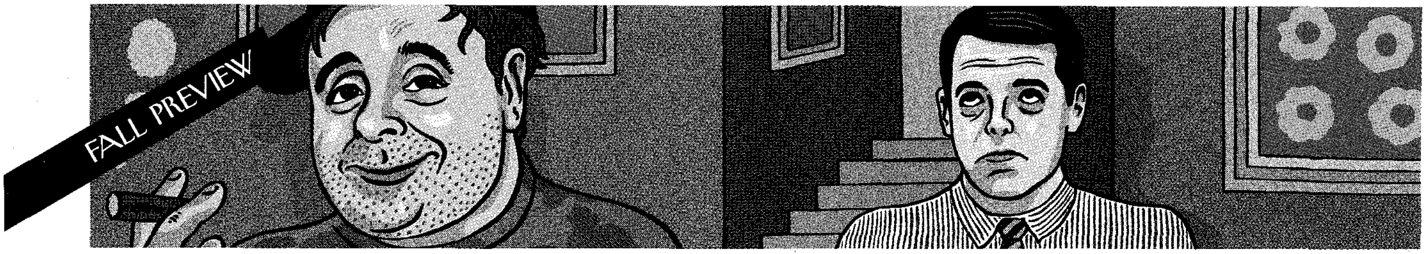

MICHAEL KUPPERMAN

THE THEATRE

Broadway is booming lately, with hits like "Monty Python's Spamalot" and "The Light in the Piazza," and this season features many venerable names, from playwrights and actors to shows themselves. Look for a new comedy by Richard Greenberg and an old one by Neil Simon, "The Odd Couple," starring Nathan Lane and Matthew Broderick. Wendy Wasserstein has a drama to unveil, and new musicals come in colors: Andres Llyod Webber's "The Woman in White," based on the Victorian mystery by Wilkie Collins from 1860, and "The Color Purple," by Alice Walker (adapted by Marsha Norman). And longer-running musicals get a boost, too, with Rosie O'Donnell stepping into "Fiddler on the Roof" and Brooke Shields recharging "Chicago."

"A NAKED GIRL ON THE APPIAN WAY"

(Oct. 6) This farcical comedy by Richard Greenberg stars Richard Thomas and Jill Clayburgh (who will also be in the revival of "Barefoot in the Park" in January) as parents whose grown children return from a year abroad with shocking news.

"THIRD"

(Oct. 24) In Wendy Wasserstein's first full-length play in five years, a professor (Dianne Wiest) accuses a student (Jason Ritter) of plagiarism.

"SWEENEY TODD"

(Nov. 3) Stephen Sondheim's grand, barbarous musical about a cannibalistic butcher returns to Broadway in John Doyle's acclaimed production, set in a lunatic asylum.

"SEASCAPE"

(Nov. 21) Elizabeth Marvel and Frances Sternhagen star in a revival of Edward Albee's absurdist 1974 drama about people, sea creatures, and the meaning of life.

OFF BROADWAY

Taye Diggs and Anthony Mackie lead the cast in a revival of Charles Fuller's Pulitzer Prize-winning "A Soldier's Play" (Oct. 17). Michael C. Hall, of "Six Feet Under," returns to the Roundabout to play the title character in "Mr. Marmalade" (Nov. 20), a comedy in which adults are seen through children's eyes. And in Christopher Durang's new comedy, "Miss Witherspoon" (Nov. 29), a woman can't stay dead, despite her best efforts.

THE THEATRE
OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.

ABSURD PERSON SINGULAR
Alan Ayckbourn's triptych brings together three couples of different social classes on consecutive Christmas Eves. The Manhattan Theatre Club revival stars Mireille Enos, Clea Lewis, Sam Robards, Alan Ruck, Deborah Rush, and Paxton Whitehead. John Tillinger directs. Previews begin Sept. 22. (Biltmore, 261 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200.)

COLDER THAN HERE
MCC Theatre opens its twentieth-anniversary season with the U.S. première of a dark comedy by Laura Wade, about a detail-oriented homemaker who plans her own funeral. The cast includes Judith Light, Brian Murray, Sarah Paulson, and Lily Rabe. Abigail Morris directs. In previews. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 212-279-4200.)

CYCLING PAST THE MATTERHORN
Shirley Knight and Brenda Wehle star in a comedy by Deborah Grimby, about a street psychic and her mother, who is losing her sight but not her wit. Directed by Eleanor Holdridge. In previews. (Clurman, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

FRAN'S BED
Mia Farrow stars in Playwrights Horizons' thirty-fifth-anniversary season opener, a play written and directed by James Lapine ("Passion," "Sunday in the Park with George"), about a woman who revisits her memories as she lies in a sickbed, surrounded by her family. In previews. Opens Sept. 25 at 7. (416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

THE GREAT AMERICAN TRAILER PARK MUSICAL
Set in a Florida trailer park called Armadillo Acres, this musical comedy has a book by Betsy Kelso (who directs), music and lyrics by David Nehls, and a set by Derek McLane ("I Am My Own Wife"). One preview on Sept. 21. Opens Sept. 22 at 7. (Dodger Stages, 340 W. 50th St. 212-239-6200.)

IN MY LIFE
A romance between a musician with Tourette's syndrome and an obsessive-compulsive journalist is the subject of this new musical written and directed by Joseph Brooks, the composer of the treacly pop ballad "You Light Up My Life." Previews begin Sept. 27. (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

IN THE CONTINUUM
A dramatization of the plight of African and African-American women whose lives are affected by H.I.V./AIDS comes to Primary Stages, in a play written and performed by Nikkole Salter and Danai Gurira. Robert O'Hara directs. In previews. (59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200.)

IN THE WINGS
Jeremy Dobrish directs a new play by Stewart F. Lane, about a couple of wannabe actors whose romance is imperilled when one of them gets a lucky break. In previews. (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 212-239-6200.)

LATINOLOGUES
A collection of comic and thoughtful monologues about the Latino experience in America comes to Broadway from the West Coast. Directed by Cheech Marin (of the Cheech and Chong movies) and written by Rick Najera, who also performs, along with Eugenio Derbez, Rene Lavan, and Shirley A. Rumierk. In previews. (Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE MASTER BUILDER
Ibsen's play about an architect with a heavy conscience comes to the Pearl, in a production directed by Shepard Sobel. Previews begin Sept. 22. (80 St. Marks Pl. 212-598-9802.)

MEDEA
The Classical Theatre of Harlem presents its 2002 production of the tragedy, adapted and directed by Alfred Preisser. April Thompson plays the title role. In previews. Opens Sept. 23 at 8. (HSA Theatre, 645 St. Nicholas Ave., near 141st St. 212-868-4444.)

A NAKED GIRL ON THE APPIAN WAY
Richard Thomas and Jill Clayburgh star in a new comic drama by Richard Greenberg ("Take Me Out"), about parents whose lives are disrupted when their grown children return from a year abroad with surprising news. Presented by the Roundabout Theatre Company and directed by Doug Hughes. In previews. (American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 212-719-1300.)

NO FOREIGNERS BEYOND THIS POINT
This new play by Warren Leight ("Side Man"), based on his own experiences in 1980, is about two East Coast liberals teaching English in Guangdong, China. Presented by Ma-Yi Theatre Company and directed by Loy Arcenas. In previews. Opens Sept. 25 at 5. (Culture Project, 45 Bleecker St. 212-352-3101.)

PASTORALIA
George Saunders's story about a man and a woman whose day job is playing Neanderthals in a theme park has been adapted for the stage by Yehuda Duenyas. Previews begin Sept. 21. Opens Sept. 25 at 4:30. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 212-352-3101.)

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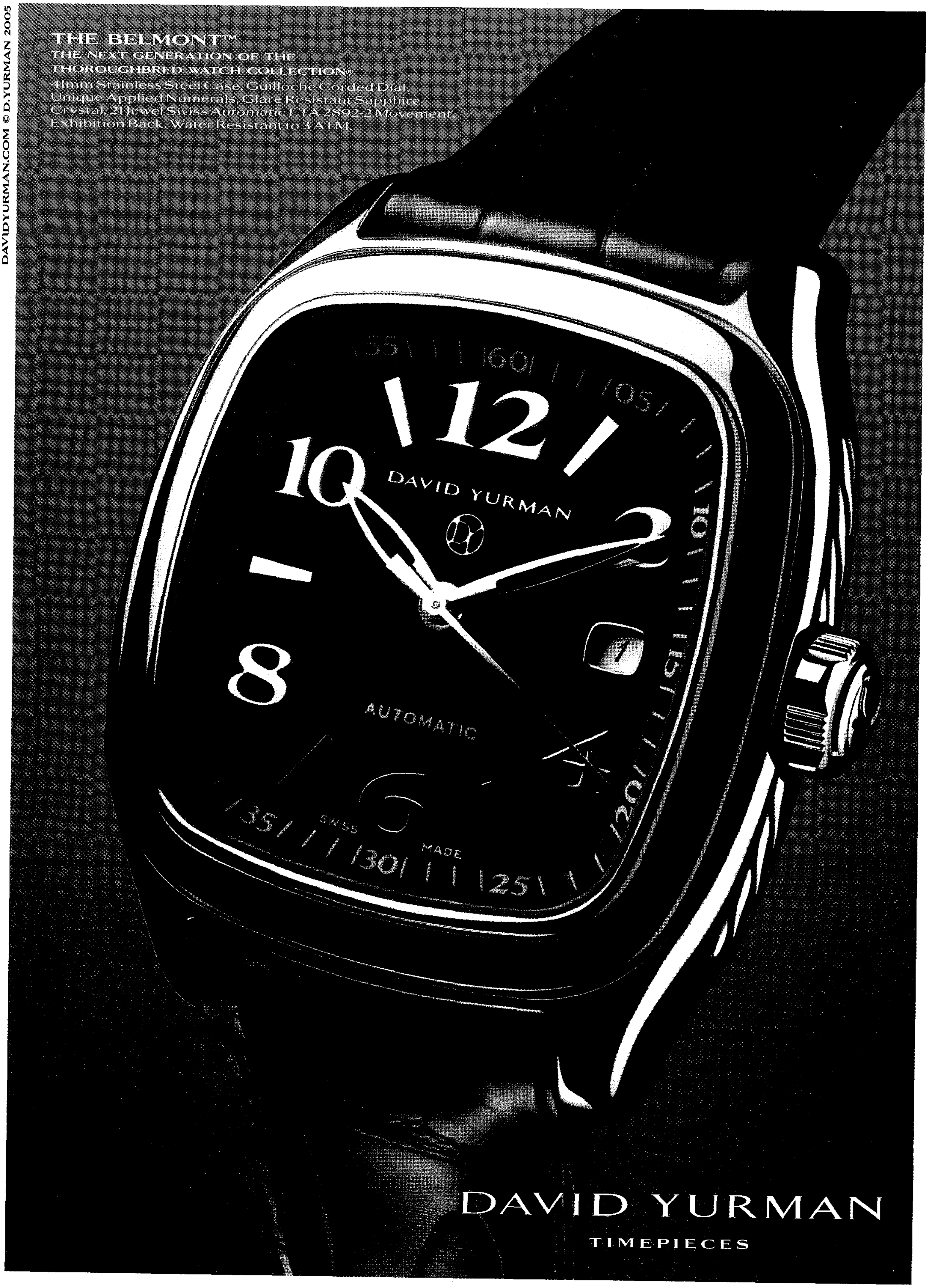
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TIMEPIECES

NEW YORK BAL HARBOUR AMERICANA MANHASSET ATLANTA HOUSTON LAS VEGAS SOUTH COAST PLAZA

POOR THEATRE
The latest production of the Wooster Group is an exploration of the boundaries of theatre that pays homage to Jerzy Grotowski, William Forsythe, and Max Ernst. Opens Sept. 21 at 8. (Performing Garage, 33 Wooster St. 212-868-4444.)

A SOLDIER'S PLAY
Charles Fuller's Pulitzer-winning drama from 1981 about a murder in a black battalion in Louisiana during the Second World War receives its first major New York revival. Teagle F. Bougère, Joaquin Pérez Campbell, Taye Diggs, and Anthony Mackie lead the cast. Jo Bonney directs. In previews. (Second Stage, 307 W. 43rd St. 212-246-4422.)

WALKING DOWN BROADWAY
The world première of a 1931 play by the New York writer Dawn Powell, about two sisters from Ohio who move to New York and lose their illusions, is presented by the Mint Theatre Company. Steven Williford directs. In previews. Opens Sept. 25 at 7. (311 W. 43rd St. 212-315-0231.)

A WOMAN OF WILL
Amanda McBroom, author of the 1979 hit ballad "The Rose," has written the book and lyrics for this musical about a modern lyricist who rhapsodizes about Shakespeare's leading ladies as she tries to write songs for an update of "The Merchant of Venice." Music by Joel Silberman, who also directs. In previews. (Daryl Roth, 101 E. 15th St. 212-239-6200.)

NOW PLAYING

THE BLOWIN OF BAILE GALL
Ato Essandoh stars in a new drama by Ronan Noone, about workers on a construction site in western Ireland who bristle when a contractor hires an African refugee (the "blowin" of the title) instead of a local. Directed by David Sullivan. (Irish Arts Center, 553 W. 51st St. 212-868-4444.)

THE BREADWINNER
The Keen Company revives W. Somerset Maugham's 1931 comedy about a British stockbroker who abruptly decides to skip out on his nattering wife and spoiled kids. As the discontented patriarch, Jack Gilpin turns in a wry performance tinged with longing; we're clearly meant to prefer the deserter to the inane desertees. The play may be unfairly skewed, but Carl Forsman's spry direction makes the most of the material. (Connelly, 220 E. 4th St. 212-868-4444.)

COMMEDIA DELL SMARTASS
The women's theatre group New Georges presents a new comedy by Sonya Sobieski, about a high-achieving Girl Scout, a fencer who reads Machiavelli, and other eccentrics. Directed by Jean Randich. (Ohio, 66 Wooster St. 212-868-4444.)

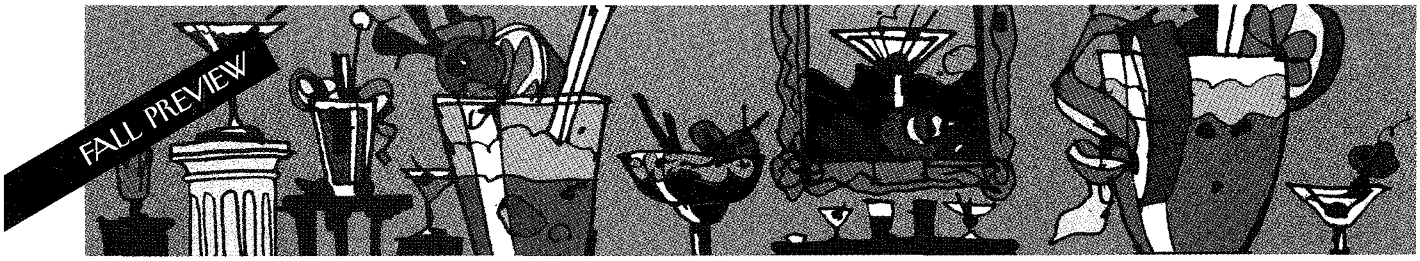
DR. SEX
A love triangle between Dr. Alfred Kinsey, his wife, Clara, and their boyfriend, Wally, has become a musical comedy, with a score by Larry Bortniker and a book by Bortniker and Sally Deering. Directed by Pamela Hunt. (Peter Norton Space, 555 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

FORBIDDEN BROADWAY: SPECIAL VICTIMS UNIT
Gerard Alessandrini's long-running Broadway spoof has added a few new shows to its list of targets. While it's tricky to send up tongue-in-cheek musicals like "Avenue Q" and "Spamalot," Alessandrini finds easy prey in "The Light in the Piazza"—an earnest musical whose plot involves a pony kick to the head. Elsewhere, the revue takes aim at Christina Applegate's broken foot, Yoko Ono's opportunism, and the goyim in the cast of "Fiddler on the Roof." (47th Street Theatre, 304 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE INTELLIGENT DESIGN OF JENNY CHOW
The Atlantic Theatre Company begins its twentieth-anniversary season with a comedy by the young playwright Rolin Jones, about an agoraphobic adopted girl who builds missile components for the U.S. Army while hunting for her birth mother. Jackson Gay directs. (336 W. 20th St. 212-239-6200.)

KISSING FIDEL
In a new play by Eduardo Machado ("The Cook"), which opens Intar's fortieth season, a Cuban-American in a vehemently anti-Castro Miami family incenses his relatives by declaring his intention to travel to Havana to make peace with Fidel. Michael John Garcés directs. (Kirk, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

LENNON
This show, or rather, revue, focusses, in standard musical-bio fashion, on Liverpool's "working-class hero" as he makes his way from the cradle to the grave, from his "Twist and Shout" days with the Beatles to his career as a solo artist, producing such ballads of white-male sensitivity as "Give Peace a Chance," "Woman," and "Beautiful Boy." Conceived and directed by Don Scardino, who also wrote the book, "Lennon" presents nine performers in the title role, meant to highlight the protagonist's multiple personae. But the conceit fails, mainly because Scardino seems less interested in the subtleties of interpreting a life story than in putting on a very, very big show with a very, very loud sound system. (8/29/05) (Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.)



NIGHT LIFE

New York City may have lost its bid for the Olympics, but foreigners will still be visiting the city soon: for the first time ever, the Country Music Awards are leaving Nashville for New York. The show, hosted by Brooks & Dunn, will be broadcast live from Madison Square Garden on Nov. 15, and the week will be filled with complementary events, including "Broadway Meets Country," at Rose Theatre (Nov. 12), in which Brian Stokes Mitchell, Bernadette Peters, and Patrick Wilson share the stage with Raul Malo, Trace Adkins, and Trisha Yearwood.

JEROEN KOOLHAAS

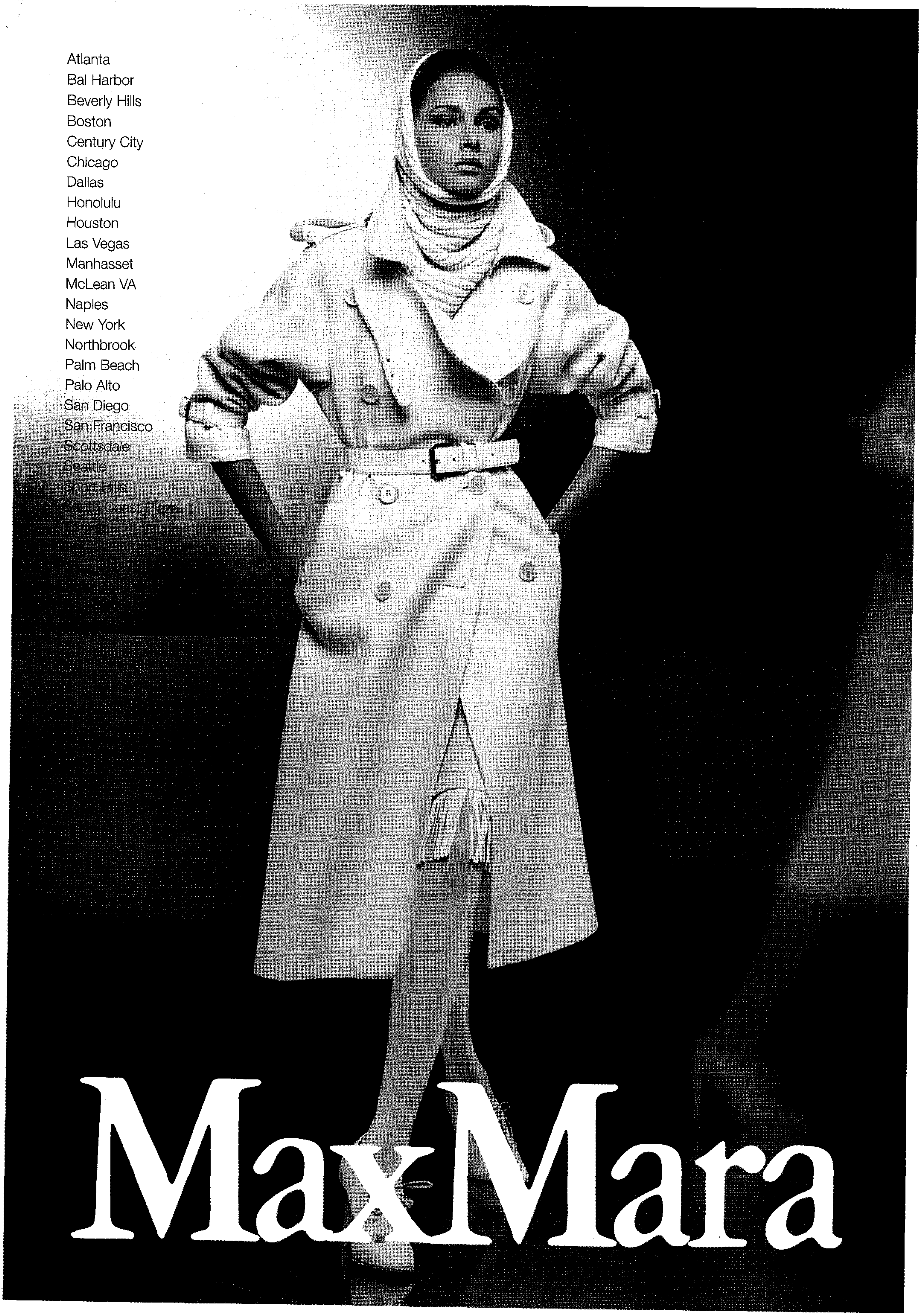
WATER VIEWS
In "Across the Narrows" (Oct. 1-2), a huge local rock festival that's the East Coast's answer to Coachella, British acts like Gang of Four, British Sea Power, and Belle and Sebastian will be joined by the Pixies, the New York Dolls, Beck, and the Lemonheads.

MIDTOWN SOUNDS
The Nokia Theatre, a new, highly adaptable concert hall in Times Square with a broadminded booking policy, opens its doors with the Los Angeles punks Social Distortion (Oct. 1-2 and Oct. 4-5); they'll be followed by the neo-bluegrass band Nickel Creek (Oct. 7), the alt-rockers Coheed and Cambria (Nov. 16-17), and many others.

JAZZ WORLD
The Afro-Latin Jazz Orchestra anchors two shows at the Rose Theatre (Sept. 30-Oct. 1) featuring Joe Lovano, Lew Soloff, and Greg Osby. For additional syncopation, the Village Vanguard has a solid run of piano trios: the Bad Plus (this week), Jason Moran and Bandwagon (Sept. 27-Oct. 2), and the Bill Charlap trio (Oct. 4-16).

BOTTOMS UP
Balance, a bar in Chelsea set to open in November, is the new home of the Museum of the American Cocktail, an organization started by a coterie of the world's top mixologists.

And, of course, there are more concerts: the Wu-Tang rapper Ghostface comes to B. B. King's Oct. 9; the onetime college-rock queen Liz Phair plays Irving Plaza Oct. 17-18; Queen performs here for the first time in two decades, with Paul Rodgers filling in for the late Freddie Mercury (Oct. 16, Continental Airlines Arena); U2 takes over Madison Square Garden for seven nights next month, starting Oct. 7, and a reconstituted Cream is there Oct. 24-26.



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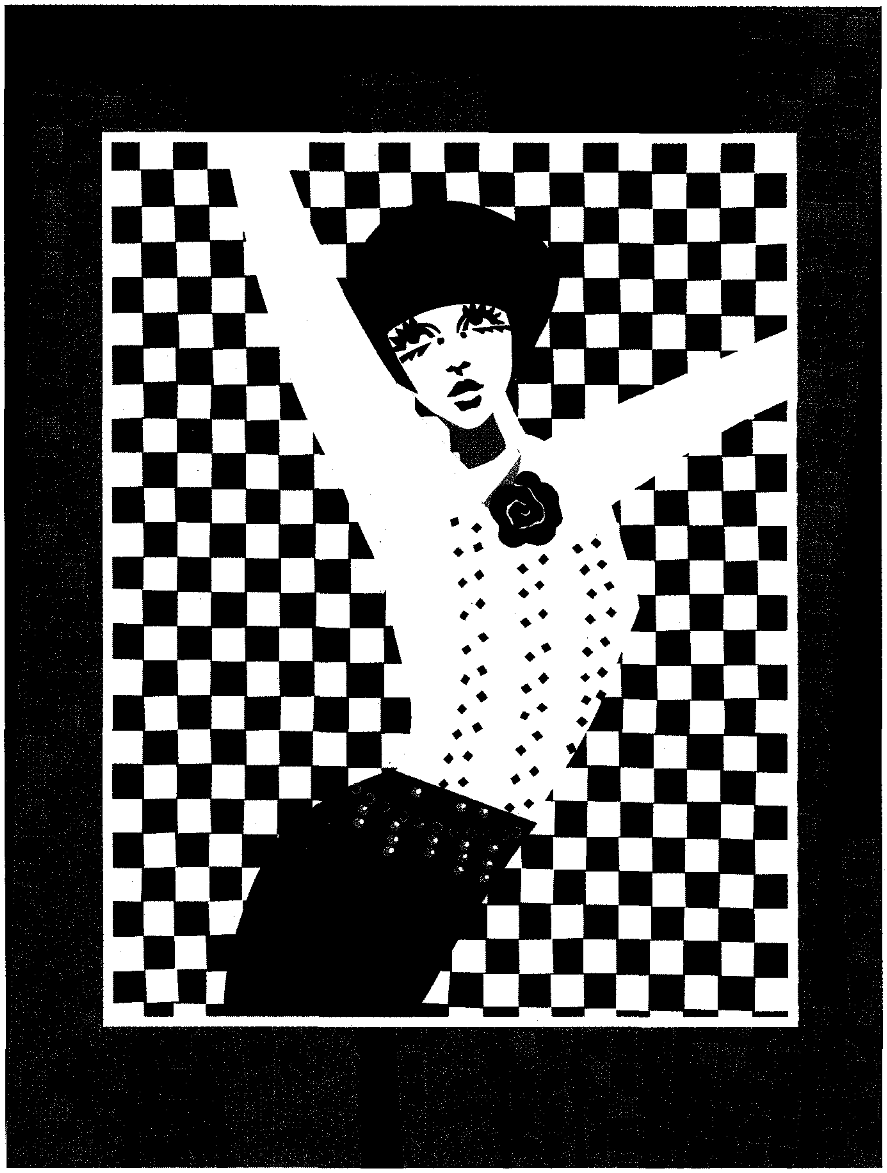


"The Snippy World of New Yorker Fashion Artist Michael Roberts" was recently published by Edition 7L. Above, a collage in tribute to the designs of Chanel.

MIRACLE BROTHERS
The Vineyard Theatre presents a new musical by Kirsten Childs, set in seventeenth-century Brazil, about two brothers, one black, one white. With choreography, featuring capoeira, by Mark Dendy. Tina Landau directs. (108 E. 15th St. 212-353-0303.)

MOTHER COURAGE
A new translation by Marc Blitzstein of Brecht's classic begins the Jean Cocteau Repertory's thirty-fifth season. David Fuller directs. (Bouwerie Lane, 330 Bowery, at Bond St. 212-279-4200.)

NEW YORK MUSICAL THEATRE FESTIVAL
The sophomore season of the hardy young showcase presents eighteen new musicals, including "The Ballad of Bonnie & Clyde," by Michael Aman, Oscar E. Moore, and Dana P. Rowe; "The Big Time," a terrorist farce by the witty Douglas Carter Beane; and "Nerds://A Musical Software Satire," a look at the rise of Bill Gates and Steve Jobs, created by Jordan Allen-Dutton, Erik Weiner, and Hal Goldberg. (For festival schedule and venue information, visit www.nymf.org. Through Oct. 2.)

ONE-MAN STAR WARS TRILOGY
In this inspired act of madness, the Canadian actor Charles Ross recaps "Star Wars," "The Empire Strikes Back," and "The Return of the Jedi" in a single hour, portraying not only Luke Skywalker, Obi-Wan Kenobi, Darth Vader, Princess Leia, and Han Solo but R2-D2 (Ross's droid whistle-speech imitation is uncanny), AT-AT walkers, the trash-compactor snake, and even the floating words in the films' opening credits. Directed by TJ Dawe. (Lamb's Theatre, 130 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE PAVILION
Brian D'Arcy James, Stephen Bogardus, and Jennifer Mudge star in a Rattlestick Theatre Company production of a new play by Craig Wright ("Orange Flower Water"), about nostalgia at a hundred-year-old dance hall in Minnesota. Directed by Lucie Tiberghein. (224 Waverly Pl. 212-868-4444.)

RED BEADS
Clove Galilee, Rob Besserer, and Ruth Maleczech participate in this multidisciplinary dance-theatre collaboration between Mabou Mines, the puppeteer Basil Twist, and the Japanese composer Ushio Torikai. Directed by Lee Breuer. (Skirball Center for the Performing Arts, 566 LaGuardia Pl. 212-992-8484. Through Sept. 24.)

SIDES: THE FEAR IS REAL
In a series of wickedly funny skits, Mr. Miyagi's Theatre Company—Sekiya Billman, Jane Cho, Paul H. Juhn, Peter Kim, Rodney To, and Hoon Lee—mercilessly caricature Asian-American actors caught up in the posturing, backstabbing, and nail-biting of the audition process. Briskly directed by Anne Kauffman. (45 Bleecker St. 212-307-4100.)

SPIRIT
Two of the macabre and mischievous creative minds behind "Shockheaded Peter" (the performer Phelim McDermott and the director Julian Crouch) are involved in this entertainment by London's Improbable company, in which three brothers struggle with various forms of conflict. (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 212-239-6200.)

Also Playing

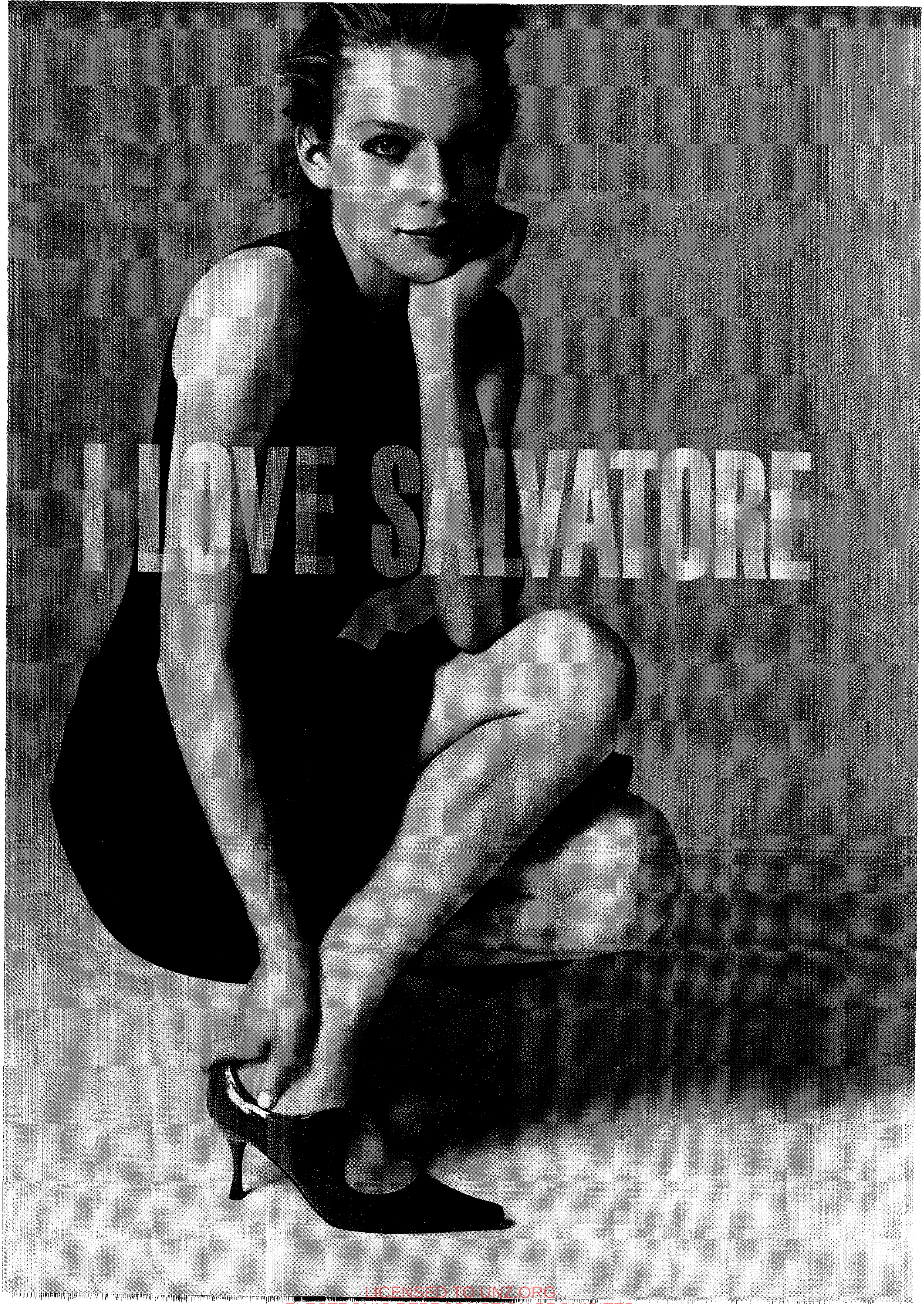
ALL SHOOK UP: Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 212-307-4100. **ALTAR BOYZ:** Dodger Stages, 340 W. 50th St. 212-239-6200. **AVENUE Q:** Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **CHICAGO:** Ambassador, 219 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200. **CHITTY CHITTY BANG BANG:** Hilton, 213 W. 42nd St. 212-307-4100. **DEDICATION OR THE STUFF OF DREAMS:** 59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200. (Through Oct. 2.) 212-239-6200. **DIRTY ROTTEN SCOUNDRELS:** Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **DOUBT:** Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200. **DRUMSTRUCK:** Dodger Stages, 340 W. 50th St. 212-239-6200. **FIDDLER ON THE ROOF:** Minskoff, 200 W. 45th St. 212-307-4100. **FOOLS IN LOVE:** Manhattan Ensemble Theatre, 55 Mercer St. 212-239-6200. **HAIRSPRAY:** Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 212-307-4100. **JOY:** Actors' Playhouse, 100 Seventh Ave. S. 212-239-6200. **THE LIGHT IN THE PIAZZA:** Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 212-239-6200. **MAMMA MIA!:** Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 212-563-5544. **MONTY PYTHON'S SPAMALOT:** Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **MOVIN' OUT:** Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 212-307-4100. **ONCE AROUND THE SUN:** Zipper, 336 W. 37th St. 212-239-6200. **ORSON'S SHADOW:** Barrow Street Theatre, 27 Barrow St. 212-239-6200. **PHILADELPHIA, HERE I COME!:** Irish Repertory, 132 W. 22nd St. 212-727-2737. (Through Sept. 25.) **THE PILLOWMAN:** Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **SWEET CHARITY:** Al Hirschfeld, 302 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **THOM PAIN (BASED ON NOTHING):** DR2, 103 E. 15th St. 212-239-6200. **WICKED:** Gershwin, 222 W. 51st St. 212-307-4100.

NIGHT LIFE
ROCK AND POP

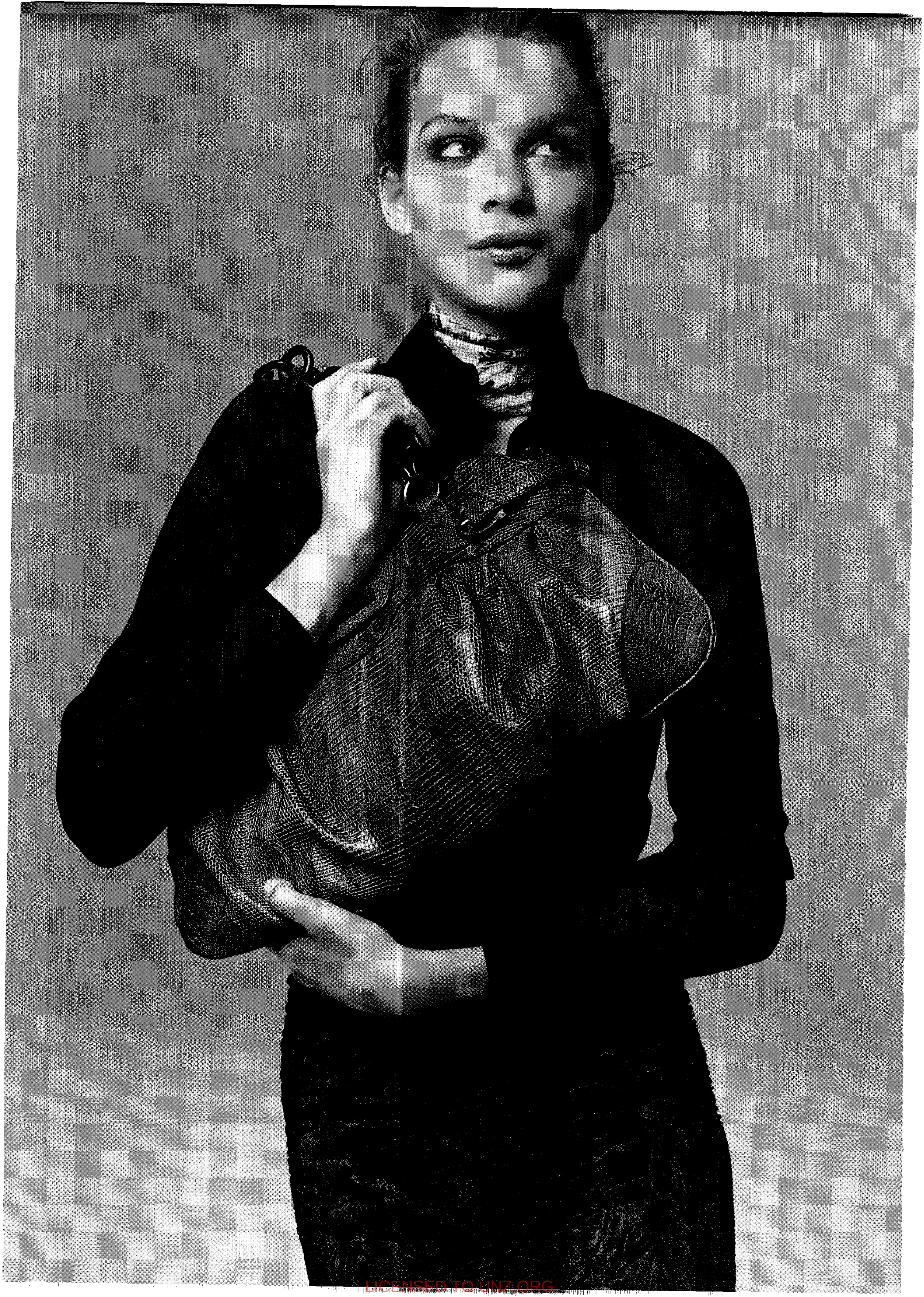
Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

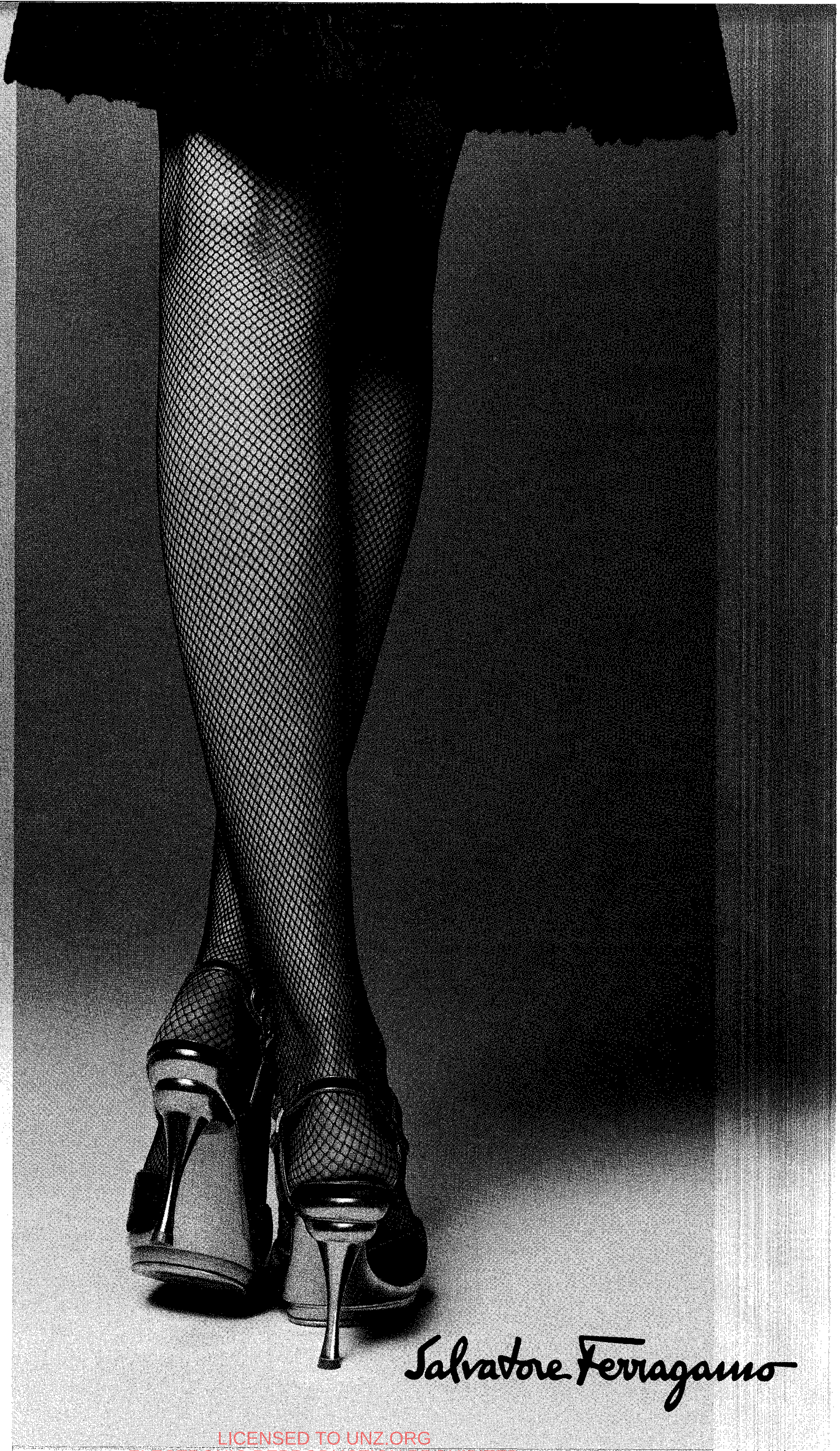
B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
237 W. 42nd St. (212-997-4144)—Sept. 22: The **B-Street Band,** a Springsteen cover outfit, pays a thirtieth-anniversary tribute to the album "Born to Run." Later that night: the smooth old-school rapper **Big Daddy Kane** takes over. Sept. 24: **Stryper,** which arose from super-conservative Orange County, California, in the eighties, put an earnest, Christian spin on hair metal (the band is renowned for lobbing Bibles into the crowd during their performances). Their career came to a halt when Metallica, Guns N' Roses, and other obvious emissaries of the Devil caught the public's favor. They disbanded in 1992, but they're back with a fittingly titled album, "Reborn." Sept. 25: **Delbert McClinton.** Over the course of a long, meandering career that has included teaching John Lennon a few harmonica tricks, in 1962, writing "Two More Bottles of Wine" for Emmylou Harris, in 1978, and scoring his own soulful hit, "Giving It Up for Your Love," in 1980, this raucous West Texas singer has remained an uncategorizable treasure. Sept. 26: The "Legends of the Delta Blues" show brings in **David (Honeyboy) Edwards,** the ninety-year-old master of the acoustic-blues sound.

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (212-533-2111)—Sept. 22: **Rhett Miller,** of the Old 97's. Sept. 27: **Supergrass,** one of the premier Britpop bands of the nineties (along with Blur and Oasis), had a brush with fame



I LOVE SALVATORE





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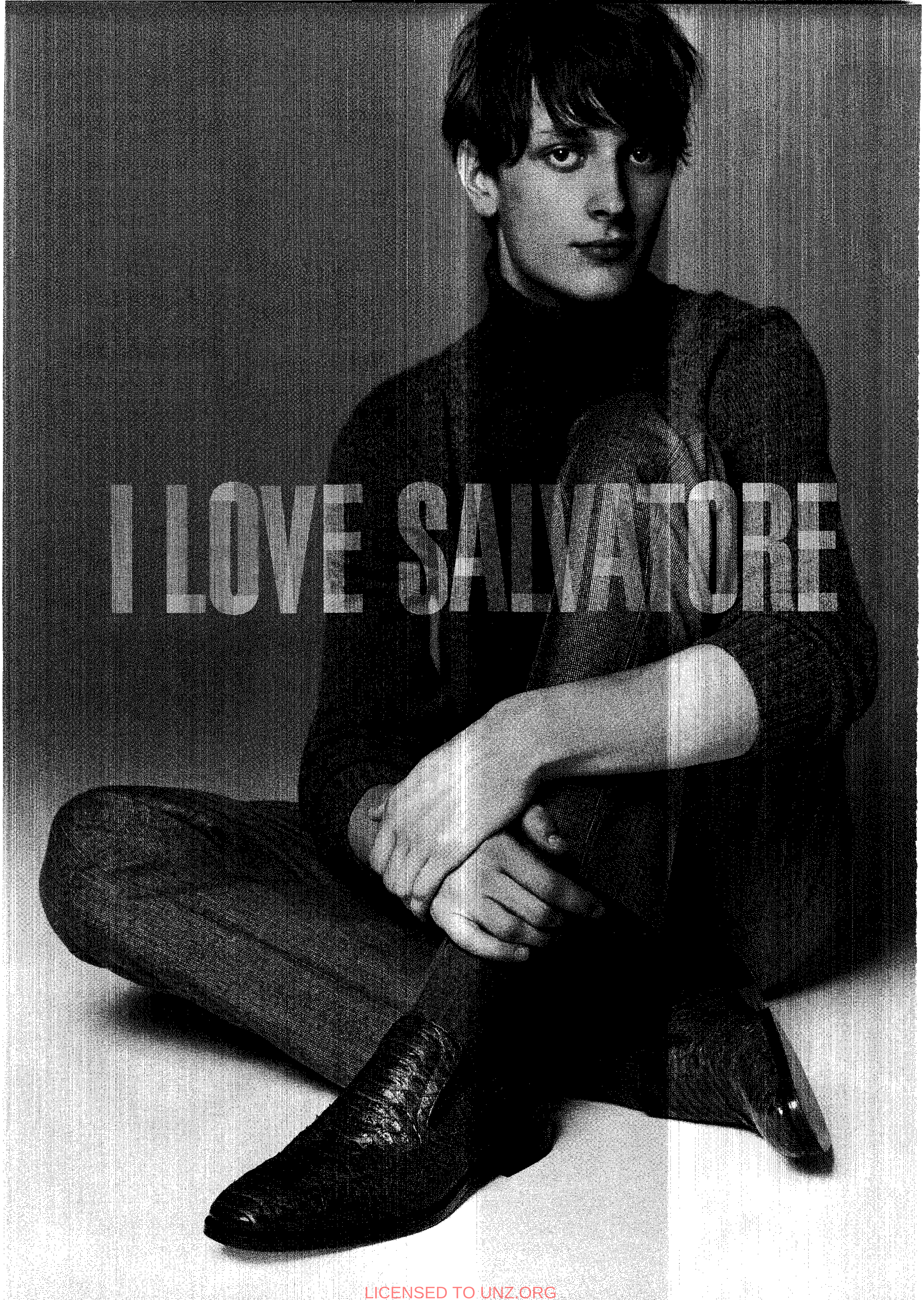

I LOVE SALVATORE

when Steven Spielberg offered to make them the stars of a "Monkees"-style television series. Cooler heads prevailed, and, although the band has a sizable audience at home, they remain a beloved cult act here.

DEITCH PROJECTS

18 Wooster St. (212-343-7300)—Sept. 23-24: The much talked about, ever-shifting neo-cabaret performance troupe the **Citizens Band** (its members range from well-known singers and actors to obscure trapeze artists and even the odd marketing executive) premières "The Trepanning Opera," a large-scale piece about "the wonders and horrors of the human body."

THE HOOK

18 Commerce St., Red Hook, Brooklyn (718-797-3007)—Sept. 27: **Weird War,** a group from Washington, D.C., once known as the Scene Creamers (a legal fight with a French graffiti collaborative led to the new name), makes bass-heavy excursions into the dark corners of the rock world. With **Kid Congo and the Pink Monkey Birds.**

IRVING PLAZA

17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (212-777-6800)—Sept. 23-24: **Citizen Cope** is Clarence Greenwood, a Memphis-born singer-songwriter who favors complex narratives about everything from race to life on the streets to religion, layered over slow grooves and funky beats. Sept. 27: **Helmet.** The guitarist Page Hamilton returns to home ground with his ferocious band. Back in the nineties, it reinvigorated heavy metal with jazz-informed time signatures and unconventional guitar tunings.

KEYSPAN PARK

1904 Surf Ave., Coney Island, Brooklyn (212-307-7171)—Sept. 24-25: The **White Stripes,** the unlikeliest success story of the decade (who knew that spartan arrangements and a devotion to a rigid color scheme could be so effective?), are on tour supporting their extremely well received, if somewhat stylistically perplexing, fifth album, "Get Behind Me Satan."

MERCURY LOUNGE

217 E. Houston St. (212-260-4700)—Sept. 21: **Thunderbirds Are Now!** This slightly goofy indie-rock act from Detroit has a hyperenergized approach to the eighties-era electronic sound. Sept. 25: The noise outfit **Wolf Eyes** occupies a cacophonous no man's land between frenzied hardcore and electronic dissonance.

THE NEW YORK JEWISH MUSIC & HERITAGE FESTIVAL

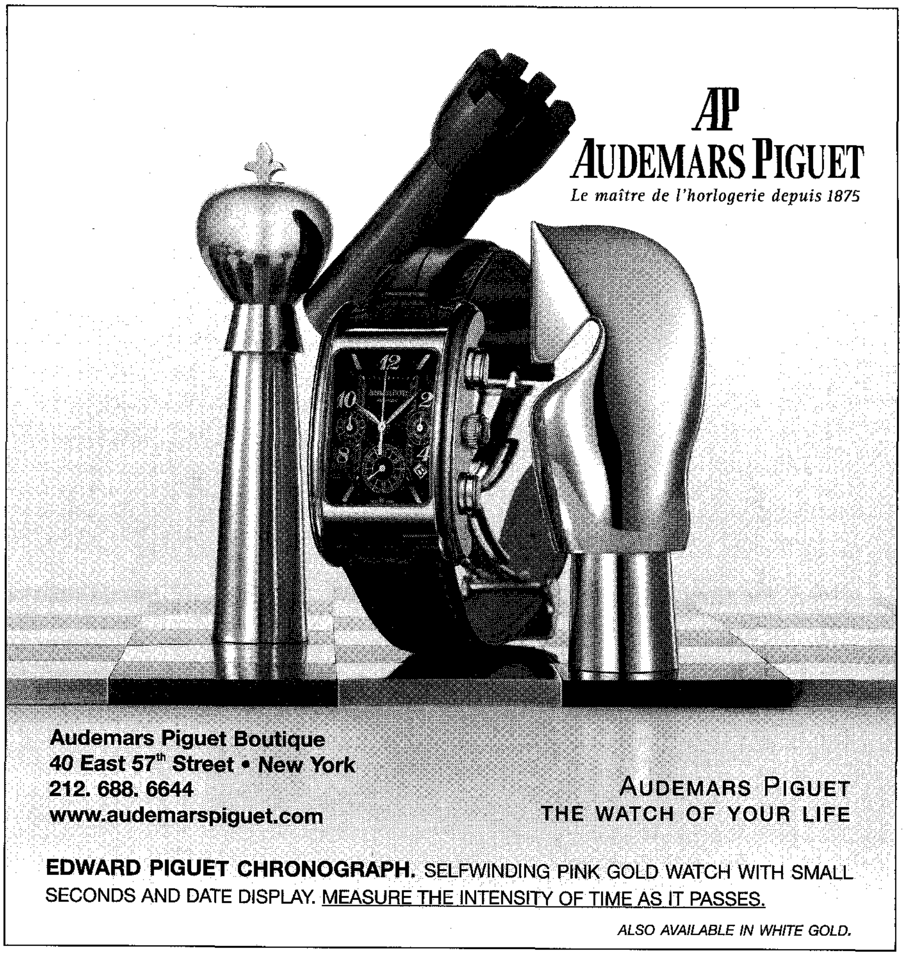
Highlights of the final week include a show by the feisty post-punk feminist **Jill Sobule** (Joe's Pub, 425 Lafayette St., Sept. 22); the world's largest klezmer brunch, in Riverside Park (Sept. 25); and performances there later that day by the bassist **Avishai Cohen,** the klezmer-rock band **Golem,** and others. (For a complete listing of festival events, visit www.oyhoo.com.)

ROSELAND

239 W. 52nd St. (212-307-7171)—Sept. 22: **Los Lonely Boys** are three young brothers from West Texas whose heroes include Stevie Ray Vaughan and Ritchie Valens. Their music is a soulful mix of blues-guitar riffs and impassioned Tex-Mex rock. They count among their ardent fans the country star Willie Nelson. Sept. 24: **Paul Weller.** The former front man of the Jam and, later, the Style Council, is now an accomplished songwriter with a penchant for polished pop and gritty soul. His latest solo album is the rolling, guitar-laden "As Is Now."

"WASHINGTON SQUARE PARK BLUEGRASSERS REUNION"

W. 4th St. at MacDougal St.—Sept. 25 at noon: Veterans of the Greenwich Village bluegrass scene, a vital but often overlooked aspect of the mid-century folk revival, return to their posts around the fountain for an afternoon of jamming. The expected musicians include **Eric Weissberg** and **Steve Mandell,** who contributed the song "Dueling Banjos" to the 1973 film "Deliverance"; **Roger Sprung,** who brought Scruggs-style playing to the city; and **Marc Horowitz,** a longtime studio player, the one-time touring partner of Judy Collins, and the or-



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ganizer of this event, along with countless other colorful and talented characters from back in the day.

WORLD MUSIC INSTITUTE
Sept. 22: The soulful, bluesy sound of the Malian troubadour **Boubacar Traoré**, who is making a rare New York City appearance. (Thalia Theatre, Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. For more information, call 212-545-7536.)

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

BIRDLAND
315 W. 44th St. (212-581-3080)—Sept. 21-24: John Coltrane would have turned seventy-nine this week. A promising unit that includes the saxophonist **Joe Lovano**, the drummer **Andrew Cyrille**, the bassist **Henry Grimes** (with **Lonnie Plaxico** replacing him on Sept. 23-24), and the pianist **Steve Kuhn**, who, in 1960, was briefly in Coltrane's début band as a leader, pays tribute to the jazz icon.

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (212-475-8592)—Sept. 20-25: The weathered but still wondrously emotive singer **Jimmy Scott** celebrates his eightieth birthday in the company of friends including **Dee Dee Bridgewater** (Sept. 20-21), **Savion Glover** (Sept. 22), and **Andy Bey** (Sept. 25).

DIZZY'S CLUB COCA-COLA
Broadway at 60th St. (212-258-9595)—The Women in Jazz festival continues in high style on Sept. 22 with a "Basie, Blues, and Beyond" program featuring **Karrin Allyson, Nancy King,** and others. Sept. 23-24: **Sherrie Maricle and the DIVA Jazz Orchestra** is joined by the singer Ann Hampton Callaway. Sept. 25: The pianist **Lynne Arriale's** trio, with **Nnenna Freelon** joining in for the late show. Sept. 27: The legendary vocalist **Helen Merrill.**

FEINSTEIN'S AT THE REGENCY
540 Park Ave., at 61st St. (212-339-4095)—**Kitty Carlisle Hart,** who's turning ninety-five, shares a lifetime of theatrical memories Sept. 20-24.

IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (212-582-2121)—Sept. 21-25: Neo-fusion from three pioneers of the genre, the guitarist **Larry Coryell,** the drummer **Lenny White,** and the former Weather Report bassist **Victor Bailey.** Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.** The **Mingus Big Band** takes over on Tuesdays.

JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER
Broadway at 60th St. (212-721-6500)—Sept. 22-24: **Frank Wess,** the last great big-band saxophone soloist still standing, joins the **Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra** for a tribute to Kansas City Jazz (Rose Theatre). Sept. 22-24: The saxophonist **Bobby Watson,** a bopper whose heart is deep in the swing era (Allen Room). (See also the Jazz Standard.)

JAZZ GALLERY
290 Hudson St., near Spring St. (212-242-1063)—Sept. 22-24: The saxophonist **Oliver Lake,** an avant-gardist for all seasons, teams up with the dynamic pianist **John Hicks** to co-lead a big band.

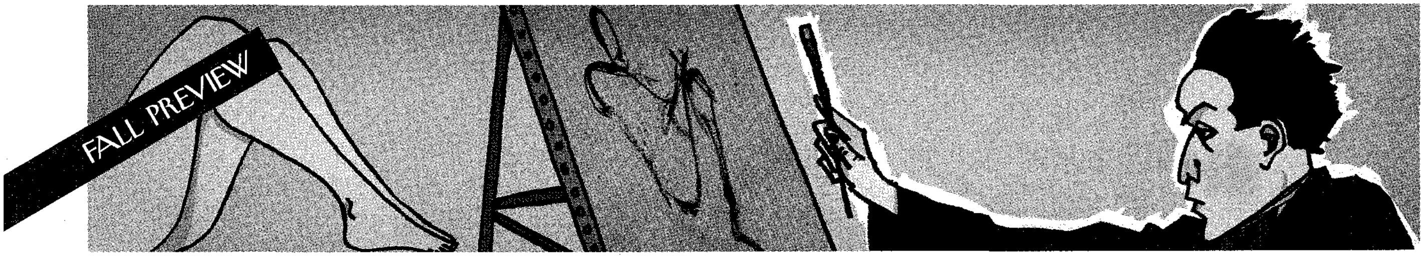
JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—Sept. 20-21: The **Bill Mays** trio, an undervalued mainstream band, marks the release of a new album, "Live at Jazz Standard." Sept. 23-25: As part of the Jazz at Lincoln Center Kansas City Festival, **Charles McPherson** turns his sights on Charlie Parker, Bird-watching that the skillful saxophonist has practiced for some five decades now.

SWEET RHYTHM
88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (212-255-3626)—Sept. 23-24: The pianist **George Cooligan** has drawn attention for his work with Cassandra Wilson. Here he steps out with a quartet featuring the saxophonist **Steve Wilson** and the bassist **Buster Williams.** Sept. 25: **Randy Sandke,** an ingenious trumpeter, composer, and bandleader, rounds up a slew of friends including the reedman **Ken Peplowski** and the singer **Carolyn Leonhart.**

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—Sept. 20-25: The **Bad Plus.** On their new album, "Suspicious Activity?," the pianist Ethan Iverson, the bassist Reid Anderson, and the gracefully pile-driving drummer Dave King continue to play acoustic jazz with rock intensity, this time covering "The Theme from Chariots of Fire." The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-535-7710)—When Charles IV was crowned King of Bohemia, in 1347, he set out to make Prague a cultural and artistic capital, like Rome or Paris, a place that would attract and encourage scholars and artists. The great flowering of art and architecture that occurred during his reign and those of his two sons, Wenceslas IV and Sigismund, is celebrated in **"Prague, The Crown of Bohemia, 1347-1437."** Opens Sept. 20. ♦ **"Matisse: The Fabric of Dreams, His Art and His Textiles,"** a revelatory, achingly



JASHAR AWAN

ART

The sweetest Renaissance master, the dreamiest symbolist, and Vincent van Gogh will soon be among us, though contemporary art seems largely bereft of anything new. This season begins with a whimsy of the late Robert Smithson—a parkland on a barge circumnavigating Manhattan: a patch of paradise that is inaccessible but, at least literally, moving.

FRA ANGELICO

(Metropolitan Museum, Oct. 26) Angelico may have been the nicest person ever to have been a great artist. A retrospective of some seventy-five of his pictures—stately and wondrous, in ambrosial colors—is a once-in-a-lifetime event. The humanist Cristoforo Landino, in a preface to a 1481 edition of the Divine Comedy, called Angelico "devout" and "blithe"—qualities that may be definitive of angels.

ODILON REDON

(Museum of Modern Art, Oct. 30) Also on cordial terms with the supermundane was Redon (1840-1916), whose determinedly weird early works in black-and-white, touchstones of fin-de-siècle decadence, gave way, after a religious crisis, to sumptuous reveries. He said, "Like music, my drawings transport us to the ambiguous world of the indeterminate."

VINCENT VAN GOGH: THE DRAWINGS

(Metropolitan Museum, Oct. 18) Van Gogh laid hold of the world bodily when he drew. The point-to-point stitchery of his line tells each detail of reality what and where it is, and how it must specifically be loved. Was he troubled? When he worked, he was—to quote from one of his letters—"calm even in the catastrophe."

STEPHEN SHORE

(P.S. 1, Oct. 23) Shore's early-seventies road trip is depicted in three hundred photographs that neatly summarize the decade—muted colors, snug trousers, junk food, and gas lines.

Perhaps of less comfort, but providing joy enough, will be MOMA's retrospective of Elizabeth Murray (Oct. 23); Egon Schiele at the Neue Galerie (Oct. 21); "Frequency," at the Studio Museum (Nov. 9), introducing emerging black artists; and, already up, the Guggenheim's blockbuster, complete with sweaty-palmed exclamation point, "Russia!"

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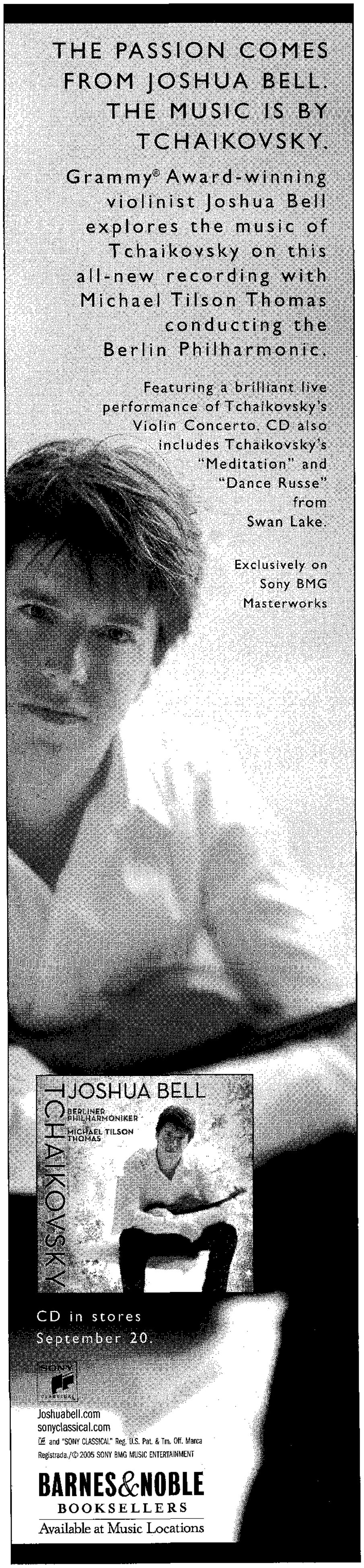
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beautiful show, pairs items from the artist's personal fabric collection with paintings and graphic works in which they played crucial roles. Through Sept. 25. ♦ **"John Townsend: Newport Cabinetmaker"** presents a few dozen pieces by a prominent Colonial American furniture-maker alongside work by his contemporaries. Townsend was the star of a clan of Quaker furniture-makers who broke up plain patterns with undulating fronts, handsome inlays, and shell carvings, resulting in one of the first distinctive American schools of design. The furniture styles evolved with the republic: the curved cabriole legs of the Colonial era gave way to straight legs relieved by stop-fluted decoration in the years after Newport was occupied by the British (1777-79), which then evolved into the geometrically strict Federal styles of the seventeen-eighties. Upended leaf tables and bureaus reveal exacting craftsmanship, and receipts and account books provide historical context. Through Sept. 25. ♦ **"Sol LeWitt on the Roof: Splotches, Whirls, and Twirls."** A warm-weather installation in the roof garden, featuring five spiky stalagmite sculptures and a wall drawing. Through Oct. 30. ♦ The centerpiece of **"The Art of Medicine in Ancient Egypt"** is a fifteen-foot papyrus (ca. 1650-1550 B.C.), on loan from the New York Academy of Medicine, explaining the diagnosis and treatment of wounds to the head, neck, and shoulders by means both scientific and magical. Ointment jars, statues of healing gods, implements, and mummies will also be on view. Through Jan. 15. ♦ The Costume Institute presents **"Rara Avis: Selections from the Iris Barrel Apfel Collection."** Through Jan. 22. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9400)—**"The High Line"** details an ambitious urban rails-to-trails scheme for the abandoned elevated tracks that run along the West Side from Gansevoort Street to Thirty-fourth Street. As laid out by Field Operations and Diller Scofidio & Renfro, the plan includes a butterfly garden, a lily pond, meadows, paths, and decks for sunbathing. One of the more ingenious ideas is "peel-up seating," in which floor planks cantilever up to make benches. Also on view are other experiments in elevated architecture from around the world, and even from out of it; the show closes with Michael Kalil's gorgeous diagrams for a spherical space-station module. Through Oct. 31. (Open Wednesdays through Mondays, 10:30 to 5:30, and Friday evenings until 8.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—The sprawling exhibition **"Russia!"** includes most everything you might think could fit under that rubric: gilt religious icons dating from the Middle Ages, Renaissance-era Western European paintings from imperial collections, romanticized portraits of peasant life, socialist-realist propaganda, early-modernist masterworks from the collections of industrialists and oligarchs, videos made just this year. Many of the items have not left Russia in centuries, if at all; pieces like Malevich's "Black Square" (which usually lives at the Hermitage), Vasily Perov's portrait of Dostoyevsky (the only one painted in the writer's lifetime), and the fifteenth-century icons of Andrei Rublev will be entirely new to most American eyes. Through Jan. 11. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART

Madison Ave. at 75th St. (212-570-3676)—**"Robert Smithson,"** a retrospective of drawings, constructions, and collages, includes filmed, photographed, and sketched documentation of the iconic "Spiral Jetty." Through Oct. 23. ♦ In 1970, Smithson outlined his plan for **"Floating Island to Travel Around Manhattan Island."** The project was unfinished at the time of the artist's death, but now, in conjunction with the Whitney's retrospective, Minetta Brook has revived it. A tugboat will pull a barge covered in soil, rocks, and flora around Manhattan from 8 in the morning to 8 at night, Sept. 17-25. ♦ Work by eight artists, including Terry Winters, Ati Maier, and Matthew Ritchie, is on display in **"Remote Viewing: Invented Worlds in Recent Painting and Drawing."** Through Oct. 9. ♦ **"Banks Violette: Untitled"** contemplates the romantic sublime with a model of a ruined church cast in salt and music composed by the black-metal musician Snorre Ruch. Through Oct. 2. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 1 to 9.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM AT ALTRIA

120 Park Ave., at 42nd St. (917-663-2453)—**"Past Presence: Childhood and Memory"** is a slight but intriguing show about childish urges and experiences. Charles LeDray addresses the compulsion to collect, with a case of two thousand tiny, pure-white porcelain vessels, too small to be anything but toys or art. A pair of Gary Simmons pieces mimic chalkboards, echoing both Cy Twombly and his own recent smudged-word paintings. Robert Beck's charcoal drawings on paper use appropriated images from a book on manly skills (one demonstrates how to skin a bunny) to evoke a boy's simultaneous attraction and resistance to growing up. And Peggy Preheim's small graphite drawings—of children, dogs, leaves, a lizard held in a hand—form a disjointed narrative, like snapshots or brief memory flashes of the world at its most marvellous. Through Oct. 13. (Open Mondays through Fridays, 11 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 7:30.)

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

Central Park W. at 79th St. (212-769-5100)—**"Dinosaurs: Ancient Fossils, New Discoveries,"** a review of recent developments in the study of dinosaurs, provides insight into how the animals moved through their world. Through Jan. 8, 2006. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45.)

CHELSEA ART MUSEUM

556 W. 22nd St. (212-255-0719)—Eighty diminutive etchings from an original 1799 print run of Francisco Goya's **"Los Caprichos"** are interspersed with a show of contemporary work, **"Here Comes the Bogey-Man."** The pieces here are considerably less controversial than Jake and Dinos Chapman's 2003 project, for which they bought a set of Goya's "Disasters of War" etchings and added cartoon heads. Yasumasa Morimura forges the most direct link, re-creating "Ruega por Ella (She Prays for Her)" in photographic form; Saint Clair Cemin's macabre wood-and-tar "Monument to Credit Card Debt" is aptly gloomy; and Madeleine Hatz's clumpy abstract paintings recall Goya's nervous line. It's easy to look right past the contemporary works; Goya's etchings, including the Romantic icon "The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters," are clearly the main draw. Through Sept. 24. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, noon to 6, and Thursday evenings until 8.)

COOPER-HEWITT NATIONAL DESIGN MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 91st St. (212-849-8300)—**"Extreme Textiles: Designing for High Performance"** is a thrilling show, quick to stoke imagination and amazement. Items on view include wing suits for skydivers, fast-deploying webs for riot control, and the Tumbleweed, a giant computerized beach ball that follows the wind on Mars, periodically deflating to collect data. Through Oct. 30. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10 to 5, Fridays, 10 to 9, Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, noon to 6.)

DAHESH MUSEUM OF ART

580 Madison Ave., at 57th St. (212-759-0606)—On the museum's tenth anniversary, **"The Dahesh Collection: Celebrating a Decade of Discovery"** honors the academic tradition that ruled supreme before modernism. Through Sept. 22. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6.)

DRAWING CENTER

35 Wooster St. (212-219-2166)—The Trinidadian artist Peter Minshall designs costumes and performances for carnival—and for pageants like the opening ceremonies for the 2002 winter Olympics, in Salt Lake City. **"Looking at the Spirits: Peter Minshall's Carnival Drawings"** presents hundreds of his preparatory sketches. Through Oct. 29. (Open Tuesdays through Fridays, 10 to 6, and Saturdays 11 to 6.)

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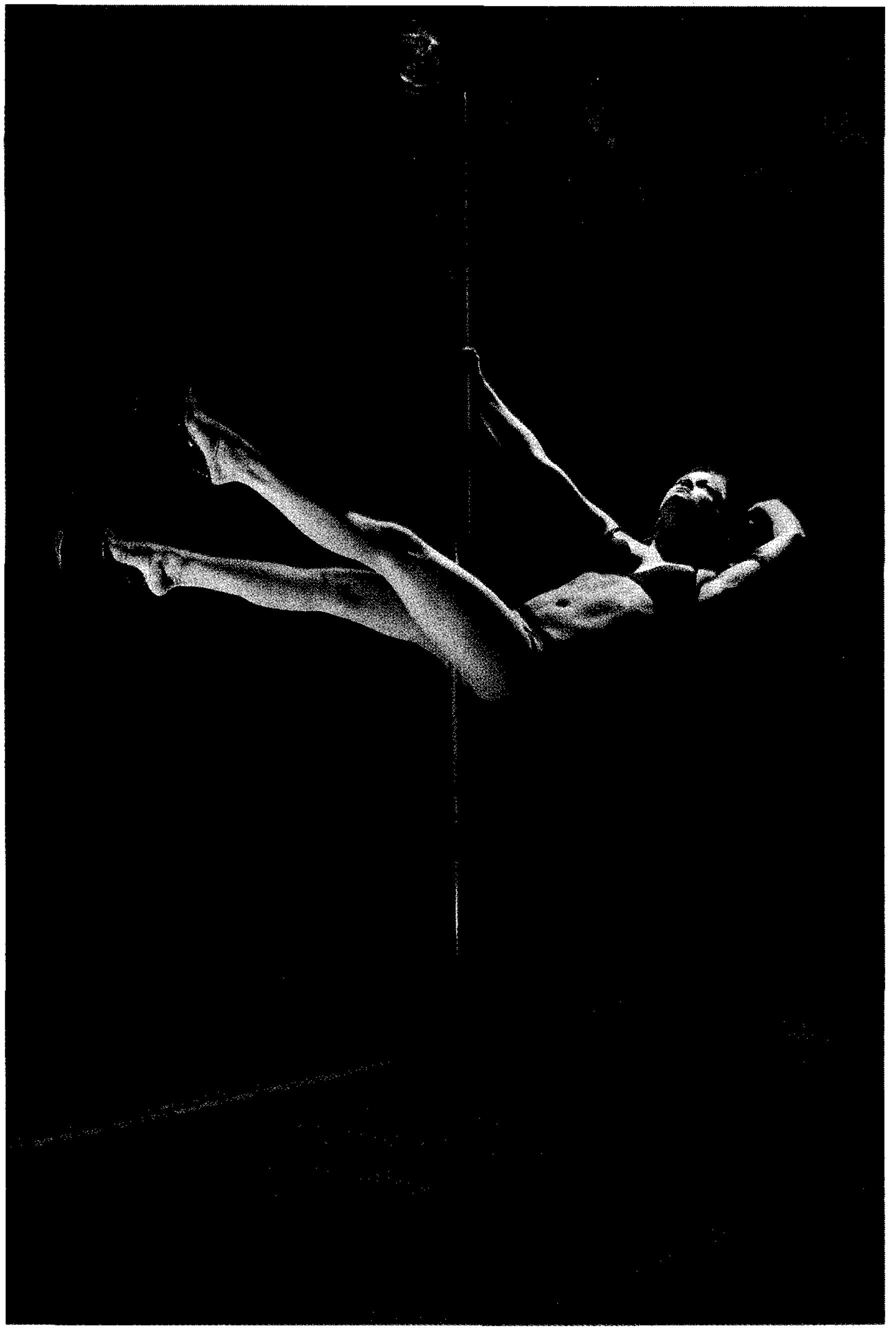


Philip-Lorca diCorcia's "Hannah" (2004), at Pace MacGill in Chelsea.

JEWISH MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 92nd St. (212-423-3200)—**"Joan Snyder: A Painting Survey, 1969-2005"** includes more than thirty works that chart the artist's navigation of the narrows between macho formalism and the more personalized aesthetics of second-wave feminism. Through Oct. 23. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 11 to 5:45, Thursdays, 11 to 9, and Fridays, 11 to 3.)

NEUE GALERIE
1048 Fifth Ave., at 86th St. (212-628-6200)—**"War/Hell: Master Prints by Otto Dix and Max Beckmann."** Through Sept. 26. (Open Fridays, 11 to 9, and Saturdays through Mondays, 11 to 6.)

P.S. 1 CONTEMPORARY ART CENTER
22-25 Jackson Ave., at 46th Ave., Long Island City (718-784-2084)—Five years ago, the omnibus "Greater New York" filled P.S. 1 from boiler room to rafters with an exhilaratingly fresh cross-section of new work by artists with studios in and around Gotham. Many of those included have gone on to establish enviable careers, and the stakes are high for **"Greater New York 2005,"** a survey of current art life involving six curators and more than a hundred and sixty artists. The good news is that smart, skillful innovation and stubborn insistence on personal vision outrun the inevitable hype. There is forgettable stuff, of course, but every room holds something thought-provoking and new—unlike most comparable tastemaker surveys, this one deserves the "must-see" moniker. Through Sept. 26. (Open Thursdays through Mondays, noon to 6.)

SOUTH STREET SEAPORT MUSEUM
12 Fulton St., at Water St. (212-748-8600)—Walt Whitman, as he himself proclaimed, was large; he contained multitudes. **"Walt Whitman and the Promise of America"** accordingly describes a wide slice of life in Brooklyn and Manhattan's Five Points during the later nineteenth century. Treasures include a first edition of "Leaves of Grass," a pair of the poet's large and battered boots, and some eminently touching letters he wrote on behalf of wounded soldiers during his service as a Civil War nurse. There are also ephemera, like a case of movable type such as Walt would have used in his newspapering days; a Civil War-era surgeon's field kit; a screening of "Manhatta," Charles Sheeler and Paul Strand's 1921 film juxtaposing images of the modern island with passages from "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry"; and period costumes worn by Cameron Diaz and Leonardo DiCaprio in "Gangs of New York." In the Schermerhorn Row Galleries. Through Dec. 31. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 10 to 6.)

STUDIO MUSEUM IN HARLEM
144 W. 125th St. (212-864-4500)—**"Scratch"** presents work by the museum's three artists-in-residence for 2004-05: Michael Queenland, William Cordova, and Marc André Robinson. Through Oct. 23. ♦ **"hrlm: pictures,"** a survey of Harlem photographs by James Van Der Zee, Aaron Siskind, Gordon Parks, and Dawoud Bey, among others. Through Oct. 23. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, and Sundays, noon to 6; Saturdays, 10 to 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

Galleries are usually open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6; please call the gallery for exact hours.

BRIAN ALFRED
Alfred is like a younger Ed Ruscha: obsessed with signage and urban sprawl and cities, minus the inhabitants. From a distance these bright, diminutive collages look digitally generated. Up close, smears of glue and stray wisps of paper reveal the craft employed in their making. Ruscha's muse is Los Angeles, but Alfred's vision is global and polyglot, with politics, economics, and religion intersecting. An Apple computer logo looms over a rooftop; the red stripes in an American flag turned billboard, hung vertically on a building in Iran, dissolve into falling bombs; an anonymous Northside Baptist church advertises "Go Bush Go / Praise the Lord / Pass the Ammo." Animated DVDs translate Alfred's graphic aesthetic into the temporal realm, adding an elegiac strain to his already poetic depictions of the global city. Through Oct. 1. (Mary Boone, 745 Fifth Ave. 212-752-2929.)

NEIL WELLIVER
A memorial exhibition for the artist, who died this year, centered on a group of large landscapes from the late seventies and early eighties that depict the Maine woods. Through Oct. 22. (Alexandre, 41 E. 57th St. 212-755-2828.)

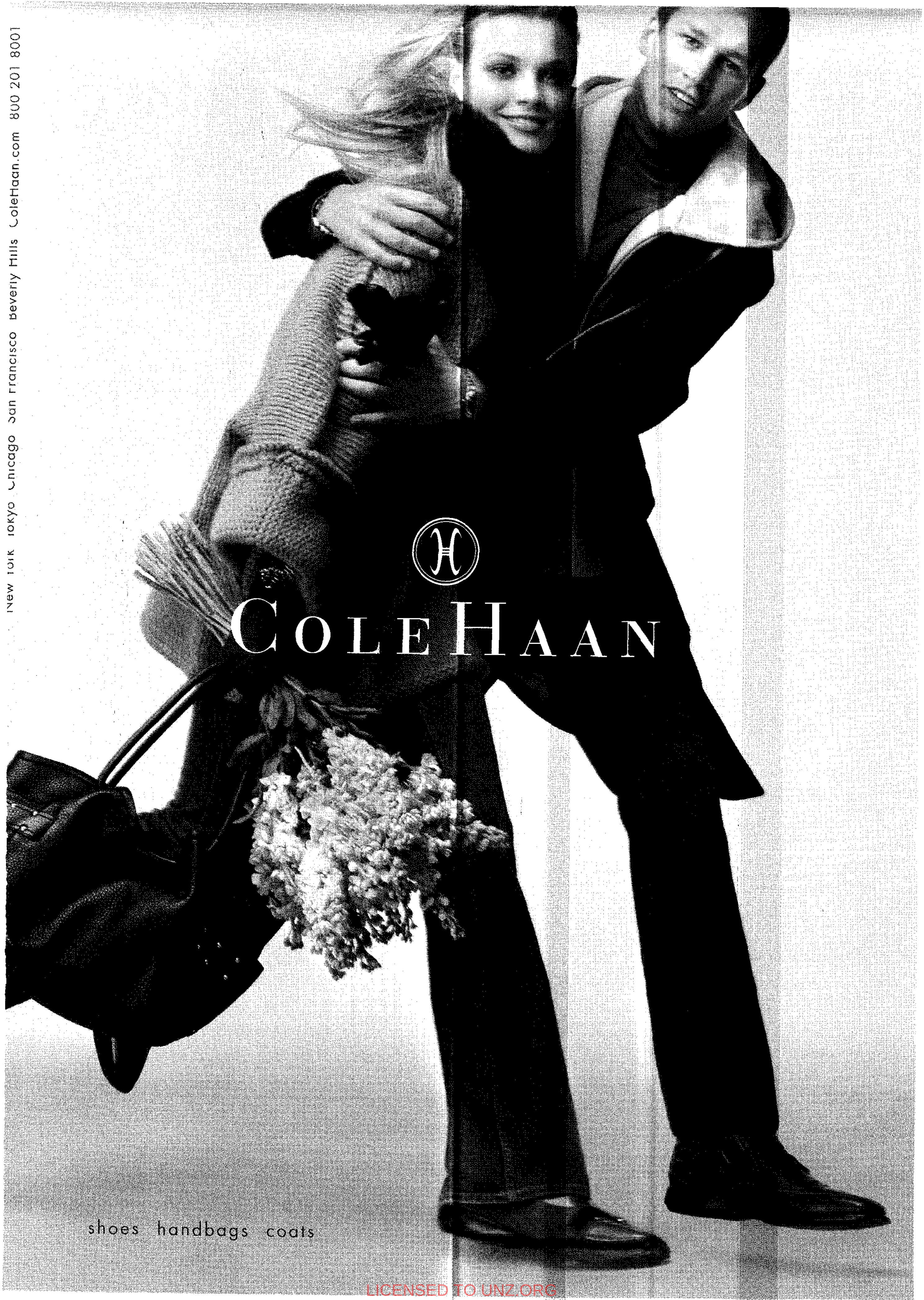
GRACIE SQUARE ART SHOW
An annual street fair, now in its thirty-third year, featuring live music and work by dozens of area artists, to benefit Carl Schurz Park. Sept. 24-25. (East End Ave. between 84th and 87th Sts. 212-459-4455.)

Short List

DISFARMER: Houk, 745 Fifth Ave. 212-750-7070. Through Oct. 15. **ERLE LORAN:** Smithsonian Archives of American Art Research Center, 1285 Sixth Ave. 212-399-5015. Through Oct. 7. **JAMES TURRELL:** Pace Wildenstein, 32 E. 57th St. 212-421-3292. Through Sept. 24. **"BEYOND GEOGRAPHY: FORTY YEARS OF VISUAL ARTS AT THE AMERICAS SOCIETY":** 680 Park Ave., at 68th St. 212-249-8950. Through Oct. 8. **"INTRODUCTIONS":** Greenberg Van Doren, 730 Fifth Ave. 212-445-0444. Through Sept. 30.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

BRIAN BELOTT / ORLAN
Appropriation has entered a new phase, the sneering irony of Richard Prince replaced with wide-eyed reverence for the wonders of the mundane world. A slide show of snapshots rescued from thrift-shop oblivion, accompanied by Dionne Warwick's "Déjà Vu," functions like Edward Steichen's classic "Family of Man" photo exhibit—only Belott's celebration of humanity showcases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the births, amateur erotica, and dorky office antics of anonymous strangers. A shelf of zanily reconfigured children's books offer low-tech interactivity, while Belott's faux-naïf collages advance the case for cuteness in serious art. Orlan, best known for bizarre, elective cosmetic surgeries, furthers her body-image exploration with a frighteningly stilted group of digitized photos depicting herself as African and pre-Columbian sculpture. Through Oct. 15. (Stux, 530 W. 25th St. 212-352-1600.)

ADAM CVIJANOVIC

A pair of murals imagines that gravity has failed, not only in greater Los Angeles but inside the artist's own apartment. In this alarming state of affairs, stucco bungalows rip free of their foundations, palm trees and surfboards float upward, and SUVs become spaceships, while the contents of a modest room stick onto the ceiling like a trompe-l'oeil fresco. It's meant as amusing social satire—the end of proper gravitas, etc. But in one of those darkly serendipitous twists of timing, what the images recall most piercingly is hurricane wreckage. Through Oct. 15. (Bellwether, 134 Tenth Ave., at 18th St. 212-929-5959.)

PHILIP-LORCA DI CORCIA

Sure to be one of the most argued-over shows of the new season, diCorcia's "Lucky 13" will not leave anyone cold. His subjects are nude or bikini-clad exotic dancers slithering down steel poles like serpents descending from a tree. But this is no exercise in macho voyeurism. The women—contorted, upended, exposed—are lit as lovingly as Caravaggio's saints but recall Francis Bacon's writhing grotesques, isolated center stage. Their expressions are withdrawn and oddly serene, as if they've absented themselves from the moment and retreated to a safe place inside the carapace of their flesh. Through Oct. 8. (Pace MacGill, 534 W. 25th St. 212-929-7000.)

SOL LE WITT

Seductive textures, visual richness, and an invitation to dream—such sensual pleasures might not be the first thing one thinks of in regard to Sol LeWitt, master of a decades-long experiment in sharp geometries and strictly set variations upon a theme. But since 2000, when his huge wall drawings stole the show in an enormous, traveling retrospective, this face of LeWitt's practice has loomed large. Here, a suite of large gouache and watercolor drawings, each made of wavy black bars against backgrounds of bright yellow, midnight blue, or brick pink, turn the room into a meditation chamber. Through Oct. 15. (Cooper, 534 W. 21st St. 212-255-1105.)

DANICA PHELPS

The little economies of everyday life—how much was this month's phone bill? how long did it take to walk the dog this morning? how often this week did you make love to your partner?—are rescued from triviality in Phelps's drawings. She keeps track with a simple but visually elegant system of ink strokes and contour drawings—red ink for expenditures, green for income, with pencilled notations of what was bought or sold and the corollary time investment. The loopy, confident drawings show the artist paying said bill, walking said dog, and loving said lover. Through Oct. 1. (Feuer, 530 W. 24th St. 212-989-7700.)

SUE WILLIAMS

Williams's arabesques of anger include a cheerily obscene painting titled "Springtime for the RNC" and a host of other biomorphic and fluorescent visual shouts. Through Oct. 29. (303 Gallery, 525 W. 22nd St. 212-255-1121.)

MARK WYSE

Wyse, a Los Angeles-based photographer, says these pictures of the California coast were inspired by Caspar David Friedrich and Gustave Courbet. So the seven modestly scaled color images here swing between romanticism and realism, between the long shot of a wave-whipped outcropping on an overcast day and the closeup of a jewel-like fish stranded in a tide pool. Wyse also tips his hat to photographic traditionalism from Minor White to Eliot Porter, but then goes off in a far more interesting direction, just this side of left field. Through Oct. 15. (Wallspace, 547 W. 27th St. 212-594-9478.)

"CLOSING DOWN"

The Bortolami Dayan gallery's ironically titled inaugural show includes work by David Salle, Tim Noble and Sue Webster, Damien Hirst, Urs Fischer, and Glenn Brown. Opens Sept. 21. (510 W. 25th St. 212-727-2050.)

Short List

TOM BURCKHARDT: Golden, 539 W. 23rd St. 212-727-8304. Through Oct. 15. **PETER CAMPUS / ANTHONY MC CALL:** Tonkonow, 535 W. 22nd St. 212-255-8450. Through Oct. 1. **DISFARMER:** Kasher, 521 W. 23rd St. 212-966-3978. Through Oct. 29. **MARCEL DZAMA:** Zwirner, 525 W. 19th St. 212-727-2070. Through Oct. 8. **JUSTIN LOWE:** Printed Matter, 535 W. 22nd St. 212-925-0325. Through Sept. 24. **MARTIN MULL:** Spike, 547 W. 20th St. 212-627-4100. Through Nov. 12. **TAM OCHIAI:** Team, 527 W. 26th St. 212-279-9219. Through Sept. 24. **BILL OWENS:** Cohan, 533 W. 26th St. 212-714-9500. Through Sept. 24. **SULING WANG / STEFANO ARIENTI:** Lehmann Maupin, 540 W. 26th St. 212-255-2923. Through Oct. 22.

TABLES FOR TWO
BRANDY LIBRARY

25 North Moore St. (212-226-5545)—No prizes for guessing what Brandy Library is about. Floor-to-ceiling shelves all around the room display nearly a thousand bottles—not just brandy (though there are more than four hundred of those) but also Scotch, bourbon, rum, Calvados, vodka, and others. An enormous copper alembic stands just inside the door, and the bathrooms are lined with woodcuts depicting distillation throughout history. The décor is masculine and clubby, with low lighting, tawny walnut finishes, tawny leather sofas, and pretty waitresses (known as librarians) swishing back and forth in tawny satin dresses. The visual effect is roughly like being inside a bottle of whiskey.

Though the underlying idea of Brandy Library seems a little on the tacky side, the execution is excellent. The owner, Flavien Desoblin, and his spirit sommelier, Ethan Kelly, have amassed a serious collection of vintages stretching back to the beginning of the last century, and their employees display a commitment to the cause of spirits that borders on the fanatical. One evening in August, a librarian hobbled in on crutches, having been hit by a cab while on a trip to Irish distilleries. The staff might demur at the value of Macallan's stratospherically priced "replica" of an 1861 vintage, instead pointing out the virtues of recherché independent bottlings from the seventies. They are equally enthusiastic if you just ask for Jack on the rocks.

Obviously, no one comes here to eat, but Brandy Library has a nice line of upscale finger food. The menu has Wall Street scrawled all over it—foie-gras this, caviar that—but it also has innovative takes on old favorites, such as bite-size burgers or "lambs in a blanket," merguez swaddled in puff pastry and harissa. The fine cheese selection comes from Artisanal and is served with fruit compotes, which are house made, as are the desserts. The clientele is a heterogeneous bunch of financial-district people, some Tribeca strays, and a few awkward dates, but the place is at its best on a quiet night, when the librarians pour themselves shots, striving to educate themselves further, and the barman discourses on the great barmen of history and their fanciful creations. (Open daily from 4 P.M. to 4 A.M. Dishes $8-$72.)

—*Leo Carey*

DANCE

"FALL FOR DANCE"

Last year, the organizers of this City Center festival bet correctly that ten-dollar tickets and programs arranged like tasting menus would woo a vibrant younger audience. The formula returns for a second season, with thirty companies from nine countries appearing over six evenings. The opening-night bill is characteristically eclectic, bringing together New York's clown prince Bill Irwin, New Zealand's Black Grace ensemble, and two delicate women from the Ballet de l'Opéra National de Lyon, who perform William Forsythe's "Duo." (131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212. Sept. 27 at 8. Through Oct. 2.)

PHILADANCO

Over the past thirty-five years, the indefatigable Joan Myers Brown has built and maintained her Philadelphia Dance Company as a robust institution in the Ailey mold. This anniversary program tests her dancers' range with three New York premières. Lynn Taylor-Corbett's "Everything Is Everything," a fairly predictable treatment of Lauryn Hill songs, isn't much of a challenge. Jawole Willa Jo Zollar's "Between Earth and Home," by contrast, transforms the company's women into a fierce flock of birds, while Ronald K. Brown's "For Mother" fuses an oblique evocation of Harriet Tubman with a celebration of Joan Myers Brown's own resilient spirit. A revival of Geoffrey Holder's irreverent, seventies-flavored "The Blues and the Bible: Genesis" fills out the lineup. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. Sept. 20-23 at 8, Sept. 24 at 2 and 8, and Sept. 25 at 2 and 7:30.)

BLACK GRACE

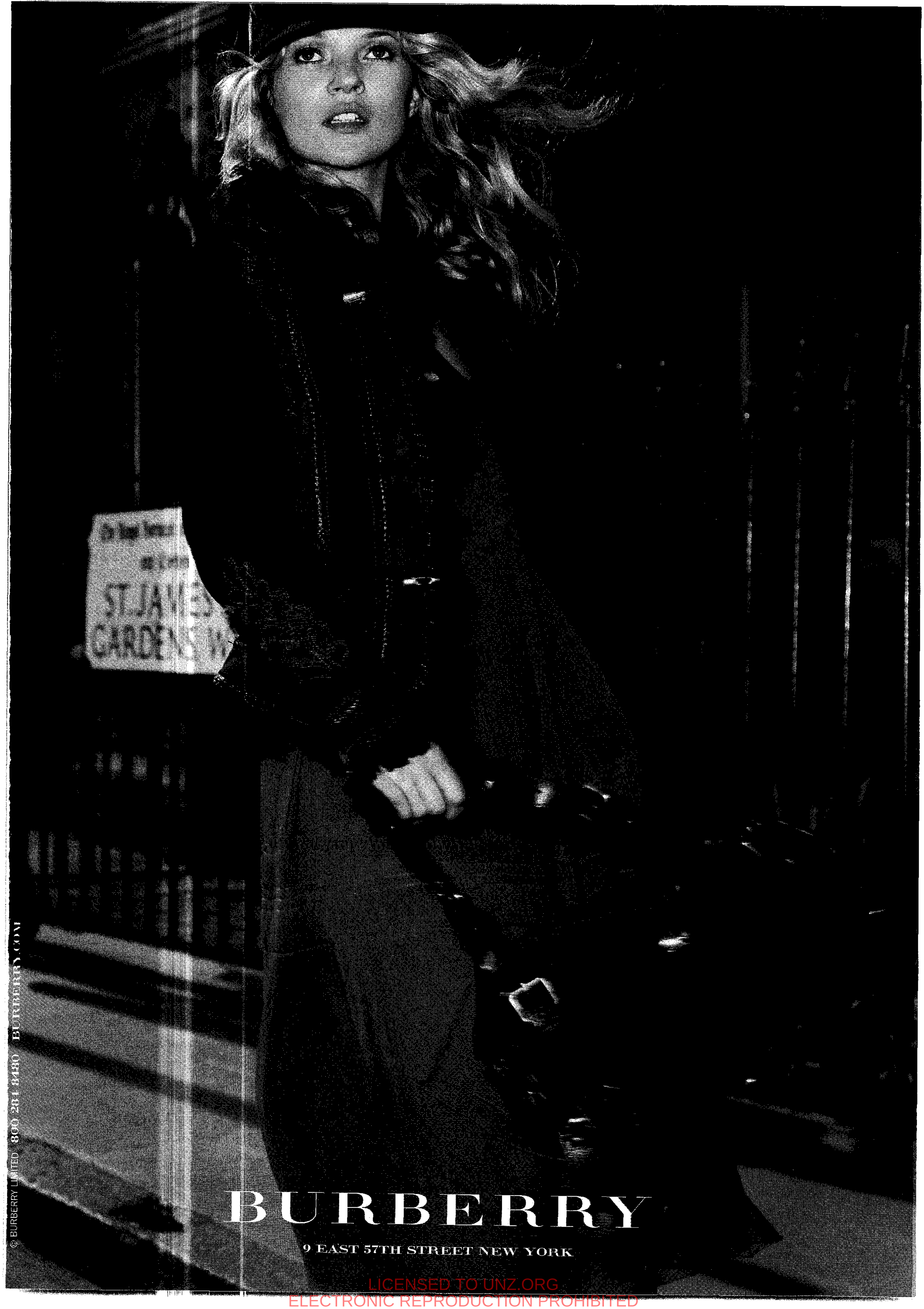
After two acclaimed runs at Jacob's Pillow, the all-male ensemble from New Zealand has its New York première. The company's dancers (primarily of Pacific Island and Maori descent) create intense rhythms: on a nearly dark stage the men's deep singing voices fill the air, mingling with the sharp sounds of a Samoan slap dance. The artistic director, Neil Ieremia, has chosen a program of personal favorites, including the bantering "Human Language," in which three female guest artists twirl and tussle with the men. (New Victory Theatre, 209 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200. Sept. 23 at 7, Sept. 24 at 2 and 7, and Sept. 25 at noon and 5. Through Oct. 9.)

"AGORA"

The innovative site-specific choreographer Noémie Lafrance ("Descent," "Noir") presents a new work, set in the empty, aqua-floored McCarren Park Pool, located between Greenpoint and Williamsburg, Brooklyn, in which dancers explore the foundations of urban society. (Lorimer St. between Driggs and Bayard Aves. For tickets and information, visit www.sensproduction.org. Sept. 20-24 at 8. Through Oct. 1.)

"FLIGHT OF MIND"

For her multiyear "Bird Brain" project, begun in 2000, the choreographer Jennifer Monson tracks migratory patterns; and it was her fascination with the birds' urban habitats that produced this new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work. In the evening's first hour, the audience "migrates" through a building transformed by reeds, plants, and dancing humans. Later, in a radically reconfigured theatre, Monson and company perform a fitful dance characterized by speedy turns and calculatedly languid shoulder rolls. The composer David Kean mixes an original soundscape from such amplified live components as footfalls, echoes, sliding props, and humming electronics. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 212-924-0077. Sept. 19-24 at 7:30; preshow at 6:30.)

"CHRISTINA OLSON: AMERICAN MODEL"
Olson was the model for the girl in the faded dress, lying on her side, gazing at a distant farmhouse, in Wyeth's "Christina's World." Olson, who was paralyzed from the waist down, refused to use a wheelchair. The choreographer Tamar Rogoff has fashioned an absorbing evening-length solo about Olson for Claire Danes. Big question: can Danes move? Answer: Yes, she can. There's little call for trained dancing in this piece, which features lots of pedestrian movement, but it takes a dancer's control, and Danes has got it. Olson's infirmity is rarely represented directly. Instead, it's suggested through the twist of an ankle, the curl of a hand, or a stylized spasm. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 212-352-3101. Sept. 21-23 at 8, Sept. 24 at 4 and 8, and Sept. 25 at 4. Through Oct. 2.)

MARTITA GOSHEN/EARTHWORKS
For the choreographer's new "Breathing Water . . . Breathing Eye," the lighting designer Aaron Copp gives the sanctuary at St. Mark's In-the-Bowery an underwater shimmer, setting the mood for the evening-length exploration of the bond between humans and whales. As one calm duo or trio blends seamlessly into the next, the former Joffrey dancer Christian Holder lurks in the shadows, moving stealthily through the marine world. With original music by David Darling and Scott Ethier. (Second Ave at 10th St. 212-674-8194. Sept. 22-25 at 8:30.)

NATYA DANCE THEATRE
World Music Institute presents the Chicago-based company in an evening of bharata natyam, the dramatic South Indian classical dance form. The troupe's nine dancers were all trained at the eponymous school established by Hema Rajagopalan thirty years ago; her daughter, Krithika, is the principal dancer and chief charmer. "Shakti Chakra," the company's two-hour signature work, draws from Hindu epic tales of human and divine interaction. With live music and narration in English. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 212-864-5400. Sept. 24 at 8.)

OUT OF TOWN

BILL T. JONES/ARNIE ZANE DANCE COMPANY
The sleek troupe presents the world première of "Blind Date," a dance-theatre meditation on the abandonment of enlightenment ideals and the changing nature of patriotism in fraught political times. With live original music by Daniel Bernard Roumain, film images by Peter Nigrini, and a multimedia set by Bjorn Amelan. (Alexander Kasser Theatre, Montclair State University, College Ave. at Red Hawk Road, Montclair, N.J. 973-655-5112. Sept. 21 and Sept. 23-24 at 7:30.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC

OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA
Sept. 22 at 7:30: The house's durable production of **"La Bohème"** enters the repertory, with a good cast that includes the (often very good) soprano Hei-Kyung Hong singing the role of Mimì, joined by Alexandra Deshorties, Roberto Aronica, and Vladimir Chernov; Philippe Auguin conducts. ♦ Sept. 23 and Sept. 26 at 8: Bryn Terfel, a singer both majestic and approachable, takes the title role in **"Falstaff"** (in the brightly restored Zeffirelli production). He will be surrounded not only by an impressive fat suit but also by a cast of superb professionals that includes Heidi Grant Murphy, Patricia Racette, Stephanie Blythe, Matthew Polenzani, and Roberto Frontali; James Levine. ♦ Sept. 24 at 1:30: A revival of Elijah Moshinsky's glorious production of **"Ariadne auf Naxos"** includes a number of notable débuts—those of Diana Damrau (Zerbinetta), Jon Villars (Bacchus), and Christopher Maltman (Harlequin)—as well as a new departure for Violeta Urmana, whose assumption of the title role might just equal her earlier triumphs in the mezzo repertory. The invaluable Susan Graham and Thomas Allen are also on hand; Kiril Petrenko. ♦ Sept. 24 and Sept. 27 at 8: Renée Fleming, the national diva, will be the uncontested star of Massenet's **"Manon,"** an opera beloved for its decadent, ancien-régime ambience and a bevy of favorite arias. The formidable Marcelo Álvarez is Des Grieux; Jesús López-Cobos. (Metropolitan Opera House. 212-362-6000.)

NEW YORK CITY OPERA
Sept. 21 at 7:30: **"Madama Butterfly,"** with Jee Hyun Lim (singing the title role), Kathryn Friest, Brandon Jovanovich (as Pinkerton), and Jake Gardner; Ari Pelto conducts. ♦ Sept. 24 at 1:30: With Shu Ying Li (in her début) replacing Lim. ♦ Sept. 22 at 7:30 and Sept. 25 at 1:30: Rossini's one-act **"Il Viaggio a Reims"** is at once a hymn to the French royal family, a witty, pre-Monty Python lampoon of rich toffs, and a vocal display piece of enormous charm. It returns to the house via James Robinson's production, which features Maria Kanyova, Allyson McHardy, Javier Abreu, and Eduardo Chama in its large cast of soloists; George Manahan. ♦ Sept. 23 at 8 and Sept. 27 at 7:30: Gilbert and Sullivan's **"Patience,"** with Tonna Miller, Myrna Paris, Michael Ball, Timothy Nolen, and Kevin Burdette; Gary Thor Wedow. ♦ Sept. 24 at 8: The best things about City Opera's presentation of Strauss's **"Capriccio"** are Stephen Lawless's lively new production—which begins in nineteen-forties country-house gloom, works through some Carol Burnett-style comedy, and ends in a golden halo of Classical grace—and the commanding La Roche of Eric Halfvarson, who

FALL PREVIEW

RACHEL DOMM

DANCE

City Center's "Fall for Dance" festival, beginning Sept. 27, presents six nights of dance by thirty companies. The autumn's later offerings will suit every brow. Ann Liv Young's unapologetically tawdry "Michael" (Dance Theatre Workshop, Oct. 19-22) takes place in a mobile home. Doug Varone's "Orpheus and Euridice" (Rose Theatre, Oct. 5 and Oct. 7-8) sets the old myth to a new score by Ricky Ian Gordon. And American Ballet Theatre presents a timely production of Kurt Jooss's 1932 "The Green Table," a prophecy of war.

"CHRISTINA OLSON: AMERICAN MODEL"

(Sept. 21-Oct. 2) The actress Claire Danes danced at P.S. 122 at the age of six. She now returns in a piece by Tamar Rogoff, about the paralyzed woman who was the model for Wyeth's "Christina's World."

AMERICAN BALLET THEATRE

(Oct. 19-Nov. 6) In addition to the company première of "The Green Table" and the world première of a work by Peter Quanz, A.B.T. presents revivals of Agnes de Mille's "Rodeo," Antony Tudor's "Dark Elegies," and Twyla Tharp's mid-eighties work "In the Upper Room," in which the dancers—some wearing sneakers, others in toe shoes—perform to a score by Philip Glass.

ARMITAGE GONE!

(Nov. 30-Dec. 18) Karole Armitage, New York's balleto-punk star of the eighties, returns from Europe with "In This Dream That Dogs Me," inspired by Asian calligraphy and the Los Angeles street-dance style known as krumping.

JOHN JASPERSE

(Dec. 2-17) In Jasperse's new "Prone," he will have the audience lie on the floor amid the dancers or sit in chairs around them.

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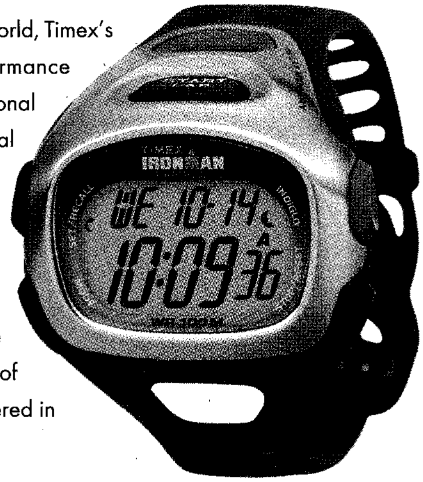

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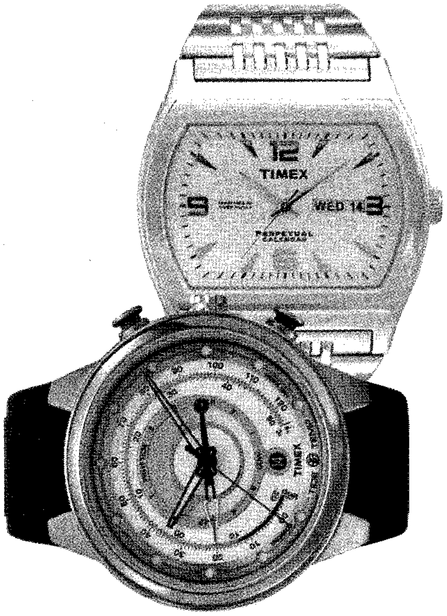

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brings crisp German diction and Met-quality vocalism to the role. Pamela Armstrong's Countess is a more domestic than regal presence, but the notes are firmly in her grasp; Manahan. (This is the final performance.) (New York State Theatre. 212-721-6500.)

AMATO OPERA
Eight different casts—an admixture of aspiring young professionals and hearty amateurs—rotate through a production of **"Tosca,"** directed by Anthony Amato, the chamber company's patriarch, at its intimate theatre in the East Village. (Amato Opera Theatre, 319 Bowery, at 2nd St. Sept. 24 at 7:30 and Sept. 25 at 2:30. 212-228-8200.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC
Two of the world's most exciting young pianists, performing under the direction of Lorin Maazel, appear with the orchestra in its first week of concerts. Sept. 21 at 7:30: The opening-night gala belongs to Evgeny Kissin, who will perform Beethoven's "Emperor" Concerto; Maazel, not to be outdone, will follow up with Strauss's "Don Juan" and "Rosenkavalier" Suite. ♦ Sept. 22 and Sept. 27 at 7:30, Sept. 23 at 11 A.M., and Sept. 24 at 8: Lang Lang, trying out a more restrained persona these days, will take the reins in Chopin's gentler Piano Concerto No. 1; the program concludes with Mahler's First Symphony. (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-875-5656.)

CHOIR OF CLARE COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE
Over the years, Timothy Brown has patiently molded this group into a worthy rival of the better-known chapel choirs of King's, Trinity, and St. John's; his charges join the boys of John Scott's St. Thomas Choir to offer a sixtieth-birthday tribute to John Rutter, the doyen of British choral composers, which will also include works by the young composers Tarik O'Regan and Nico Muhly (a première). (St. Thomas Church, Fifth Ave. at 53rd St. 212-6649360. Sept. 22 at 7:30.)

AMERICAN SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA: "INVENTING AMERICA"
In a preamble to the Great Performers series' opening-night concert on Sept. 28, Leon Botstein conducts tuneful symphonies by Roger Sessions (the First) and Randall Thompson (the Second), along with Bloch's "America: An Epic Rhapsody." (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-875-5030. Sept. 25 at 3.)

RECITALS

JUDITH INGOLFSSON
Ingolfsson, the gold-medal winner at the 1998 International Violin Competition of Indianapolis, offers a recital of works by Mozart, Tartini (the "Devil's Trill" Sonata), and Stravinsky (the Divertimento) at St. Paul's Chapel of St. Bartholomew's Church. (Park Ave. at 51st St. 212-378-0248. Sept. 21 at 6:30.)

THE KITCHEN: "MYTH OF NATIONS"
A diverse group of musicians—including the poet and rapper Seraphim, the drummer Jim Black, and the violinist Carla Kihlstedt—will both narrate and perform a new ensemble work by the composer and instrumentalist Raz Mesinai, an exploration of good and evil inspired by ancient Sumerian mythology. (512 W. 19th St. 212-255-5793. Sept. 21-22 at 8:30.)

BARGEMUSIC
Sept. 22-23 at 7:30: The violinist David Salness and the cellist Evelyn Elsing join the pianist Rita Sloan in a concert of trios by Brahms (No. 3, in C Minor) and Schumann (No. 1, in D Minor), along with Shulamit Ran's "Soliloquy" (1997). ♦ Sept. 24 at 7:30 and Sept. 25 at 4: A program offered by violinist Mark Peskanov, the cellist Dmitry Kouzov, and the pianist Olga Vinokur begins with Mozart, continues with Schumann (the "Fantasiestücke" for Cello and Piano), and ends with Tchaikovsky's eloquent Piano Trio in A Minor. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083.)

NEW JUILLIARD ENSEMBLE
Joel Sachs's expert young musicians perform works written for the group by such composers as Jack Beeson ("Ophelia Sings"), John Psathas, and Kenji Bunch. (Peter Jay Sharp Theatre, Juilliard School. 212-769-7406. Sept. 24 at 8.)

JUPITER SYMPHONY CHAMBER PLAYERS
The violinist Stefan Milenkovich and the pianist William Wolfram join the Jens Nygaard tribute ensemble in repertory familiar (Dvořák's Piano Quintet), obscure (quartets by Vanhal and Hoffmeister), and in between (Martinů's Nonet). (Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church, 152 W. 66th St. 212-799-1259. Sept. 26 at 2 and 7:30.)

JUPITER STRING QUARTET
The young ensemble, which won the Young Concert Artists International Auditions in 2005, makes its New York début with works by Mendelssohn, Dutilleux ("Ainsi la Nuit"), and Schubert (the Quartet No. 14, "Death and the Maiden"). (Zankel Hall. 212-307-6656. Sept. 27 at 7:30.)

CONCERTANTE
The vibrant young string ensemble offers Lou Harrison's String Trio along with sextets by Brahms (No. 1, in B-Flat Major) and Bridge. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 212-501-3330. Sept. 27 at 8.)

SOHEIL NASSERI
The dashing young pianist performs the first of three Beethoven recitals this season, a program including the Sonatas Nos. 5-7 (Op. 10) and 21 ("Waldstein"). (Weill Recital Hall, Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. Sept. 27 at 8.)

POP NOTES
FORGING AHEAD

When James McMurtry was sponsored into semi-stardom by John Mellencamp, in the late eighties, he had all the right touchstones for a contemporary alt-folk troubadour: a literary pedigree (he's the son of the novelist Larry McMurtry), John Lennon glasses, and a Lou Reed voice. But after his two-fisted early records, McMurtry carved out a niche that threatened to become a rut. His new album, **"Childish Things"** (Compadre), restores some power to the proceedings. The album's unmistakable centerpiece is "We Can't Make It Here," a seven-minute saga that seems like an antiwar song but is really a more general jeremiad about busted promises—"The billionaires get to pay less tax / The working poor get to fall through the cracks." McMurtry writes long, and his songs have a way of wearing you out, but just as often they draw you in, from "Memorial Day" (sharp, mean family melodrama) to "Holiday" (sharper, meaner, better sung) to the title track (nicks a John Prine melody and some of his wistfulness, too). A cover of Peter Case's "The Old Part of Town" is the kind of rave-up that's never exactly been McMurtry's thing—or rather, it's too many other people's thing, too—and his duet with Joe Ely on the traditional "Slew Foot" is less magical than it should have been. But for every misstep there's a step forward, like "Six Year Drought," in which the typically thick-skinned narrator says, "I am just a visitor here / The drought won't hurt me none." Read "flood" for "drought" and it's an anthem.

If the new album by the prolific blues guitarist and singer Otis Taylor, **"Below the Fold"** (Telarc), doesn't operate much differently from "Double V," from last year, or "Truth Is Not Fiction," from the year before, that's because Taylor has a working model. His songs continue to mix history ("Your Children Sleep Good Tonight," about the 1914 mining massacre in Ludlow, Colorado), autobiography ("Mama's Got a Friend," about his mother's own post-separation lesbian relationship), and archetype ("Working for the Pullman Company," which is sung by his nineteen-year-old bassist and daughter, Cassie); and his sound is still Velvet Underground Railroad—he may drone but he never stays still, and when he moves he's always heading toward places you haven't seen.

—Ben Greenman

OUT OF TOWN

CONCERTS AT TANNERY POND
Christian Steiner's musical fiefdom, ensconced in an acoustically splendid Shaker tannery, finishes its summer season a little late, with a final concert by the mezzo-soprano Susanne Mentzer and the pianist Craig Rutenberg, featuring works by women composers (Lili Boulanger, Alma Mahler, Carrie Jacobs-Bond), as well as Schumann's "Frauenliebe und -leben," a lyrically astute (but psychologically dense) attempt to understand the female mind. (Darrow School, Route 20, New Lebanon, N.Y. 888-820-1696. Sept. 24 at 6.)

SOUTH MOUNTAIN CONCERTS
Opus One, featuring the violinist Ida Kavafian and the pianist Anne-Marie McDermott, is the next group to grace this high-class Berkshire autumn series; they will offer piano quartets by Mozart (in G Minor, K. 476) and George Tsontakis (No. 3, from 2005) along with Schubert's "Trout" Quintet. (Route 7, Pittsfield, Mass. Sept. 25 at 3. Tickets at the door. For more information, see www.southmountainconcerts.org.)

MOVIES
OPENING

DEAR WENDY
In a drama written by Lars von Trier and directed by Thomas Vinterberg ("The Celebration"), a young loner (Jamie Bell) starts a club for enthusiasts of vintage handguns. With Bill Pullman, Michael Angarano, and Mark Webber. Opening Sept. 23. (Angelika Film Center.)

DORIAN BLUES
A coming-of-age comedy about a young gay man who leaves his conservative home town to attend New York University. Written and Directed by Tennyson Bardwell. Opening Sept. 23. (Chelsea Cinemas and Quad Cinema.)

FLIGHTPLAN
In a thriller directed by Robert Schwentke, Jodie Foster plays an airplane designer whose young daughter disappears mid-flight on a trip to New York City. With Peter Sarsgaard and Erika Christensen. Opening Sept. 23. (In wide release.)

A HISTORY OF VIOLENCE
David Cronenberg's latest thriller, with Viggo Mortensen as a small-town diner owner whose life is changed after he thwarts an attempted robbery. With Maria Bello, William Hurt, and Ed Harris. Opening Sept. 23. (Lincoln Square.)

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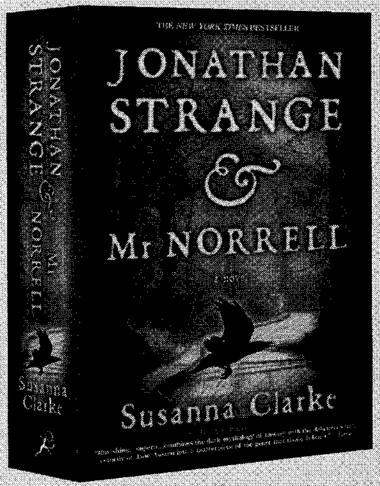

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INTO THE FIRE
In this drama directed by Michael Phelan, a New York City police lieutenant (Sean Patrick Flanery) and a Manhattan music teacher (Melina Kanakaredes) must cope with post-9/11 tragedy. Opening Sept. 23. (Sunshine Cinema.)

OCCUPATION: DREAMLAND
A documentary about the American soldiers who were deployed to Falluja, Iraq, in the winter of 2004. Directed by Garrett Scott and Ian Olds. Opening Sept. 23. (Cinema Village.)

OLIVER TWIST
The director Roman Polanski and the screenwriter Ronald Harwood adapt the Dickens novel. With Ben Kingsley and Barney Clark. Opening Sept. 23. (In wide release.)

ROLL BOUNCE
A roller-disco comedy starring Bow Wow. Directed by Malcolm D. Lee ("Undercover Brother"). Opening Sept. 23. (In wide release.)

NOW PLAYING

THE ARISTOCRATS
In this one-of-a-kind documentary, made by Paul Provenza and Penn Jillette (of Penn & Teller), some of the greatest comics of the day take turns telling a simple dirty joke from vaudeville days. The joke is about a show-business family, and it features a short setup, a two-word punch line, and an infinitely expandable middle section detailing the special nature of the family's act. In that redolent middle, the comics exercise their virtuosity at excremental, incestuous, and bestial themes. The joke is told tenderly by Paul Reiser, urbanely by Martin Mull, seductively by the sublime Sarah Silverman, gravely and with much loving, superfluous detail by George Carlin, and shrilly, with an emotion bordering on hysteria, by the inspired pixie Gilbert Gottfried. Comics normally smothered under the blanket of family entertainment—Whoopi Goldberg, Jason Alexander, Bob Saget—come alive in wild-eyed bursts of obscene invention. After a few variations, the words no longer shock. The familiar obsessions, as they come off here, are so gleefully extravagant—another organ, another fluid, another outrage!—that one experiences them as a desire to embrace life more fully, or at least to embrace telling more fully.—*David Denby* (Reviewed in our issue of 8/29/05.) (In wide release.)

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST
Jean Cocteau's first full-length movie (he wrote and directed it), from 1946, is perhaps the most sensuously elegant of all filmed fairy tales. As a child escapes from everyday family life to the magic of a storybook, so, in the film, Beauty's farm, with its Vermeer simplicity, fades in intensity as we are caught up in the Gustave Doré extravagance of the Beast's enchanted landscape. In Christian Bérard's makeup, Jean Marais is a magnificent Beast; Beauty's self-sacrifice to him holds no more horror than a satisfying romantic fantasy should have. The transformation of the Beast into Prince Charming is ambiguous—what we have gained cannot quite take the place of what we have lost. (When shown the film, Greta Garbo is reported to have said at the end, "Give me back my Beast.") The delicate Josette Day is, quite properly, Beauty. In French.—*Pauline Kael* (Museum of the Moving Image; Sept. 24-25.)

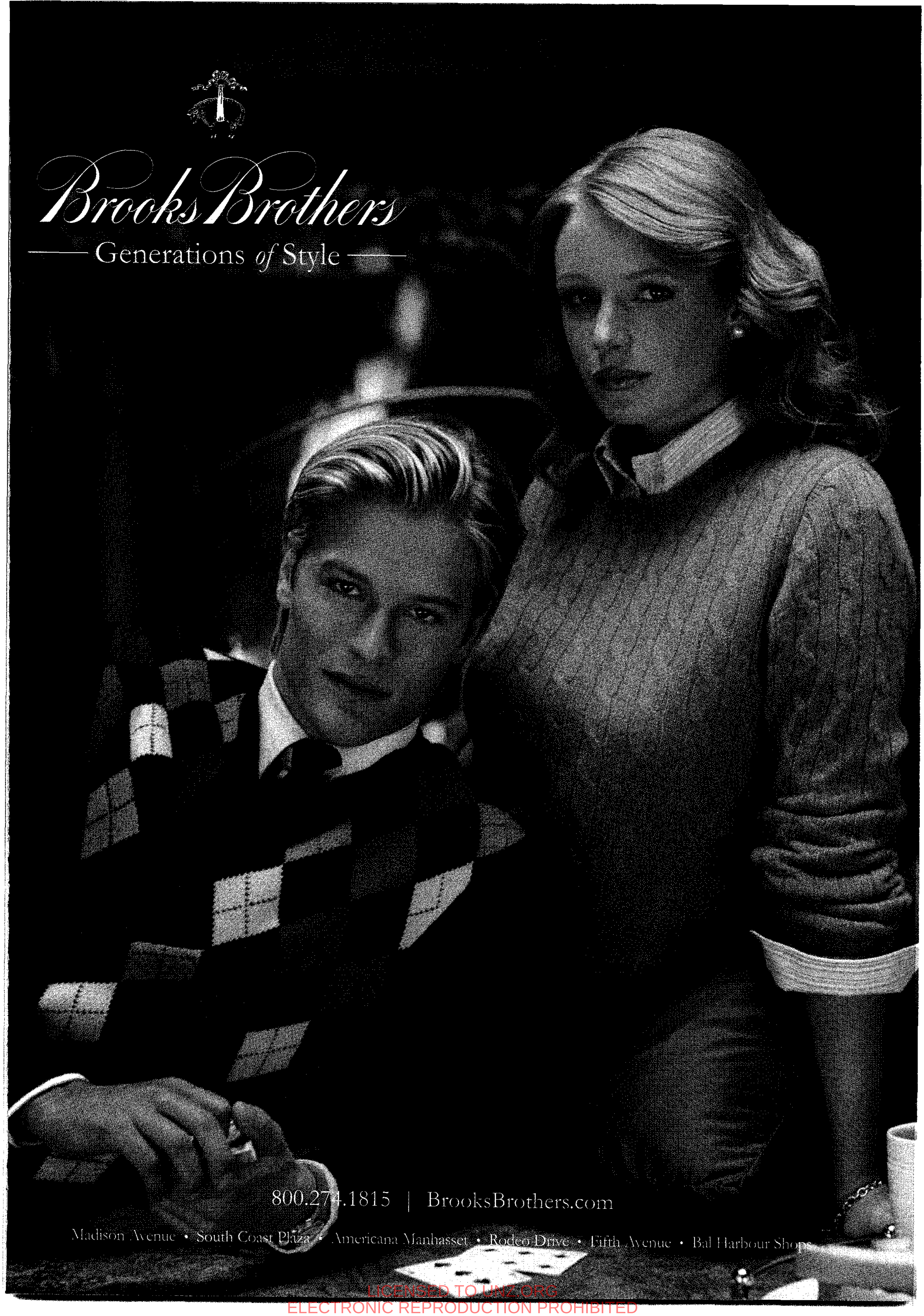
BROKEN FLOWERS
Jim Jarmusch linking up with Bill Murray is a case of Mr. Cool meeting Mr. Cool, and the resulting silences are deafening. Murray plays Don Johnston, who is allegedly an aging Don Juan. But Murray is so quiet and self-contained that he seems to want nothing. When he sets out on the road to visit the women he was dating twenty years ago, one of whom may have conceived a son with him, the movie turns into a kind of elegant alienated travelogue. Some of the actresses Murray encounters do extremely well in their brief appearances, especially Sharon Stone, as a hard-luck blonde who doesn't demand too much from life, and Jessica Lange, as an iron-willed fraud who "talks to animals." Jarmusch is good at the evanescent emotions of lost love and unfulfilled lives, but the movie is all gesture and unspoken longing. It's all of a piece, and well observed, but it's an art object without the energy or courage to be a work of art.—*D.D.* (8/8 & 15/05) (In wide release.)

THE BROTHERS GRIMM
Terry Gilliam had a good idea—to re-create the origins of the fairy-tale-spinning Brothers Grimm—but, as it turns out, the movie is yet another noisy, hyperbolic, digital farce, with people jumping in and out of the frame and turning into corpses and then coming back to life, trees endlessly moving around the woods, and much general tumult, and the movie quickly becomes tedious. As the more intellectual and scholarly Jacob Grimm, Heath Ledger is often charming, but Matt Damon, as Wilhelm Grimm, wearing Napoleonic-era locks that make his features look as bulbous as those of a carved puppet (if that was the point, it doesn't work to the actor's advantage), never finds anything to play. Gilliam, of course, has a wild visual imagination and an exuberant sense of character, but the comedy is so frenetic it quickly cancels itself out. With Lena Headey as a fearless maiden, Peter Stormare and Jonathan Pryce trying hard to be grotesque, and lots of crones, misshapen villagers holding pitchforks, and the like.—*D.D.* (In wide release.)

THE CONSTANT GARDENER
A frenzied adaptation of a John le Carré novel, if that is not a contradiction in terms. Ralph Fiennes plays a refined but bumbling British diplomat who arrives in Kenya with his belligerent new wife (Rachel Weisz). Impatient with niceties, she goes after the pharmaceutical giants, who are testing a new drug and covering up the results. When she dies, apparently in an accident, her loving and uncomprehending husband is forced to retrace her steps and rekindle some of her fire. The movie is a curious, roiling mix of genres that stirs marital romance into a heated indictment of a vast, conspiratorial crime. Thriller junkies will find it tempting but fragmentary; how is one supposed to take a car chase that ends with both drivers getting out for a chat? The director is Fernando Meirelles, who has imported the busy style of his last picture, "City of God," and given it an extra jolt; the images of Africa, forever in hot pursuit of one another, leave you not so much exhilarated as exhausted, long before the story is done. With Danny Huston and a mischievous Bill Nighy.—*Anthony Lane* (9/5/05) (In wide release.)

EVERYTHING IS ILLUMINATED
As Jonathan Safran Foer, the repressed Jewish novelist in the making who goes in search of his roots in Ukraine, Elijah Wood is inhumanly neat and wears big glasses in front of his extraordinary blue eyes. Those glasses don't seem part of his necessary equipment—he looks like Clark Kent. Many things are off in Liev Schreiber's first directorial effort, an adaptation of the novel by Foer (who named the main character after himself). The movie veers from slapstick to tragedy to shimmering wonder-of-life euphoria, not always successfully, and Schreiber can't bring the material to a satisfying dramatic climax. But there are affecting moments, too, as Jonathan wanders through the countryside with two unreliable guides from Odessa—Alex (Eugene Hutz), an Americanophile lout, and his irascible grandfather (Boris Leskin), who has buried roots of his own. Shot in Prague and its environs, doubling for Ukraine.—*D.D.* (In wide release.)

THE EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
A windy fake. A priest (Tom Wilkinson) has been charged with criminal negligence for allowing a girl to die while he performed an exorcism on her. The frame of the movie consists of an austerely photographed court trial and a high-minded debate between, on one side, science and medicine and, on the other side, faith and a belief in demons. It's a Bush-era debate—guess which side wins? We see flashbacks, in trashy horror-film style (clanking and whooshing soundtrack, creaking doors, dishes mysteriously falling off tables),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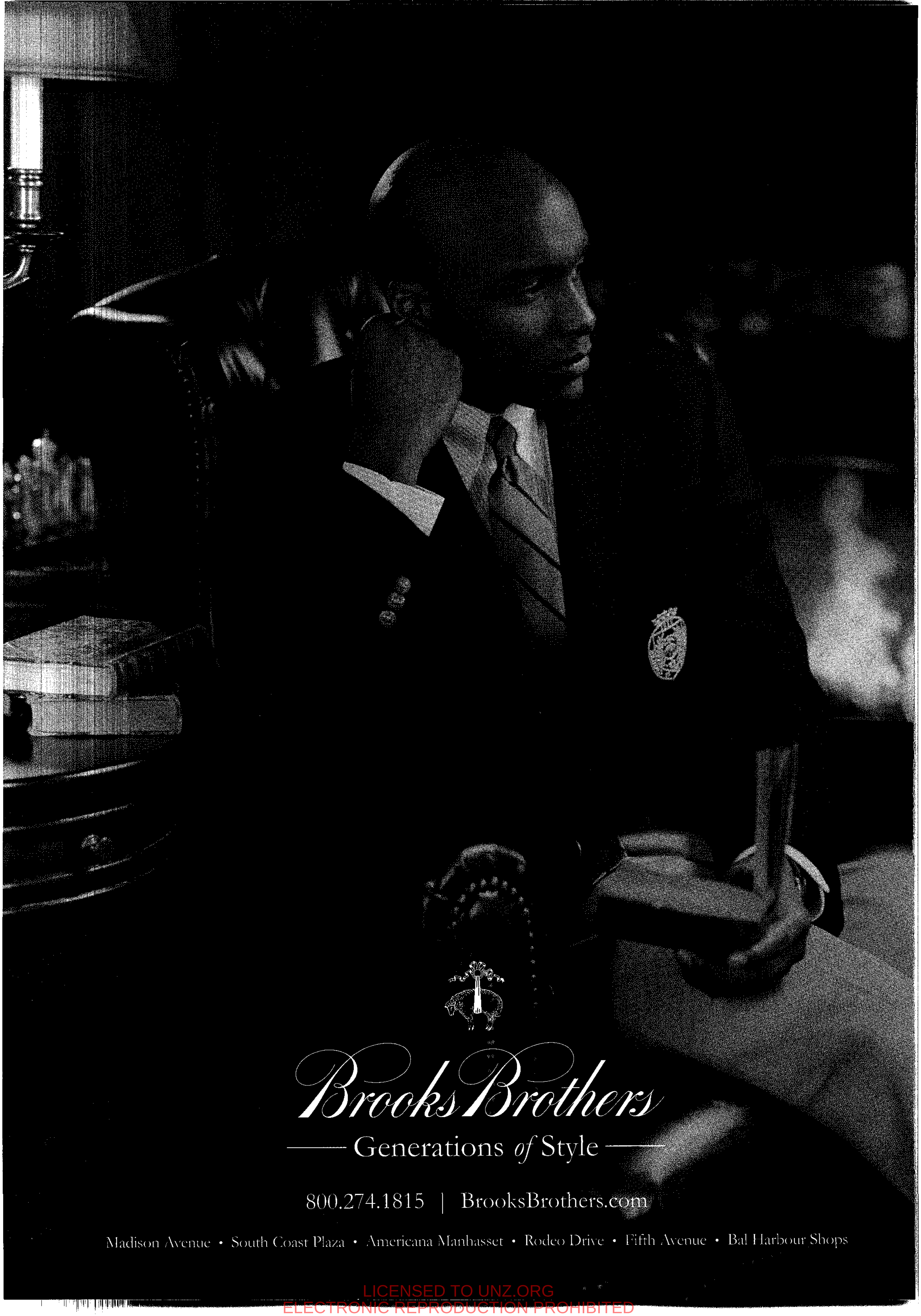
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to the anguish of a college girl (Jennifer Carpenter), who gets assaulted and torn apart by demons. In effect, for much of the film we are watching the torture of a young woman. Laura Linney and Campbell Scott huff and puff as opposing lawyers. Tom Stern did the sepulchral cinematography. Directed by Scott Derrickson, who wrote the ridiculous screenplay with Paul Harris Boardman.—*D.D.* (In wide release.)

THE 40-YEAR-OLD VIRGIN
The wildest, most scabrous jokes in this lewd hit comedy spring from a recognizable male dilemma. Andy Stitzer (Steve Carell), whose Dickensian moniker suggests "stiff," "zipper," and "stitched," got a bad start as a teen-ager and is now so afraid of women he won't go near them. Andy's fellow-workers at a San Fernando Valley electronics store, played by Seth Rogen, Romany Malco, and Paul Rudd, are full of stupid schemes to help him, but they're even more screwed up in their relations with women than he is, and delusional as well. Much of the comedy is as coarse and obvious as a burlesque show and almost as foulmouthed as "The Aristocrats," but, within the broad license that the writer-director Judd Apatow allows himself, he works with considerable delicacy and a surprising sense of detail. Elizabeth Banks and Leslie Mann have good bits as predatory women who terrify the hero; Jane Lynch, as Andy's boss, breaks into a tender Guatemalan love song; and Catherine Keener, as a real woman (that is, loving, and also trouble), ends the infantile jokes and turns the movie into a romance. Carell collaborated on the script with Apatow.—*D.D.* (9/12/05) (In wide release.)

FOUR BROTHERS
John Singleton directed this ensemble piece about four brothers out to avenge the death of their foster mother. It's an entertaining exercise in style: specifically, an urban Western, in which the spirit of Wyatt Earp hovers nearby as the men go about finding the killers. The movie is utterly preposterous—the script is cobbled together from "Oprah" moments and tough gangsta dramas—but there's plenty of gritty interplay between the brothers (played by Mark Wahlberg, Tyrese Gibson, Garrett Hedlund, and Outkast's Andre Benjamin) that's believable. Singleton moves the film along swiftly and unapologetically, creating a chaotic and graphic revenge drama that's almost purely visceral.—*Bruce Diones* (In wide release.)

GRIZZLY MAN
The indefatigable Werner Herzog has made a brilliant documentary about an American saint and fool—Timothy Treadwell, a failed actor and California surfer who fell in love with the grizzly bears in Alaska and who spent a dozen summers with the bears, usually alone and always unarmed. All was well until October, 2003, when Treadwell and his girlfriend, Amie Huguenard, were attacked and devoured by a hungry long-nosed grizzly. When the hundred hours of video footage that Treadwell shot in the last five years of his excursions fell into Herzog's hands, the German filmmaker interviewed Treadwell's friends and ex-girlfriends, naturalists, and park-service officers and wove the footage into a startling meditation on nature and innocence. Herzog is properly respectful of Treadwell, but he interprets the American as an impatient misfit who relieved his misanthropy with neurotic protestations of love in the wilderness. Treadwell doesn't seem to understand that death is at the center of any ecological balance, but Herzog, it turns out, sees nothing but death in nature. Neither man, it seems, is willing to admit that a bear is a bear.—*D.D.* (8/8 & 15/05) (In wide release.)

JUNEBUG
Meet the in-laws, North Carolina style. Phil Morrison's remarkably assured directorial début, about a cosmopolitan art dealer (Embeth Davidtz) who travels with her new husband (Alessandro Nivola) to his family home, is snarkily funny and unexpectedly moving. Set over a long weekend, the story (by Angus MacLachlan) focusses on the interaction between Davidtz's somewhat flounder-

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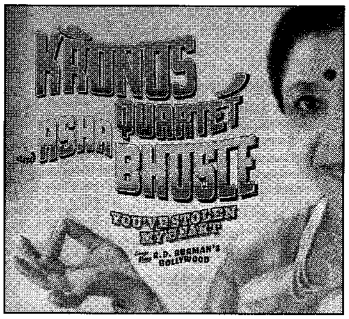

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NONESUCH

From the fantastical land of India's "Bollywood" comes the music of the **Kronos Quartet**'s latest CD – ***You've Stolen My Heart*** – a vibrant homage to film composer Rahul Dev Burman, sung by the legendary **Asha Bhosle**, who "retains the girlish keen that's made her the most instantly recognizable voice in Indian film music" *(Phila. Inquirer)*, and the single most recorded artist in the world.

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ing character and the members of her husband's complex family. There's an unhurried attention to detail that Morrison brings to the story which allows the crisp dialogue and deep characterizations room to breathe. The various narrative strands—the domineering mother (Celia Weston) who favors one son over another, the chatterbox sister-in-law (a luminous Amy Adams) who hungers for connection—come together to form a contemplative picture of a surprisingly fragile Southern family.—*B.D.* (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

KEANE

Lodge Kerrigan's independent drama tracks, in relentless closeup, the attempts of a distraught man (Damian Lewis) to survive on the mean streets of New York and New Jersey and to form fresh bonds with a hard-bitten mother (Amy Ryan) he meets in a cheap motel. The red-haired Brit Damian Lewis (from the TV series "Band of Brothers") brings a sexual aggressiveness to the role that absolves the movie of mawkishness. What we see is harrowing and squalid but also exhilarating and tender.—*D.D.* (Sunshine Cinema.)

LORD OF WAR

Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (In wide release.)

MARCH OF THE PENGUINS

This hugely successful French documentary, directed by Luc Jacquet, yields itself so readily to anthropomorphic readings that it's hard to say where bird ends and man begins. As the emperor penguins shuffle across the terrain to their mating ground with bowed shoulders, they look, from the rear, like shtetl Jews heading off to shul. Flopping to their bellies for greater speed, they could be kids taking a wave on a surfboard. After they mate, the parents take care of the children with a selfless devotion that would not seem out of place in lacrosse-mom precincts like Glen Cove or Montclair. Yet here's the miracle: the extreme coldness and clarity of the air, and the translucent blues and searing whites of the landscape, lend the ritual, however mundane, familial, and instinct-driven, an aspect of eternal splendor. One of the most touching and eye-ravishing documentaries ever made.—*D.D.* (9/12/05) (In wide release.)

PAYDAY

Shot entirely on location in Alabama, it's an acrid, hardboiled melodrama from 1973 with a feeling for authentic characters and details. An exceptionally functional script, by the novelist Don Carpenter, makes it possible for the director, Daryl Duke, to cover the grimy country-music scene of a small-time recording star—a goaty, rancidly unromantic third-rate Johnny Cash. Rip Torn, with his smirking satyr grin, will probably never have a role that suits him better than the barnstorming Maury Dann. In the back of his Cadillac between two girls, Maury is a sweating rajah, drinking Coke and beer and bourbon, smoking pot and popping pills. The movie's only real flaw is the flaw that's also present in hardboiled fiction: when a world is this clearly defined, our imagination is frustrated. With Michael C. Gwynne as Maury's manager, Cliff Emmich as his fat, loyal driver and cook who takes a prison rap for him, Elayne Heilveil as a teen-age groupie who works in a dime store, and Ahna Capri as Maury's blond mistress, who goads him at the wrong moment and is deposited in the middle of the highway.—*P.K.* (Walter Reade Theatre; Sept. 21.)

PROOF

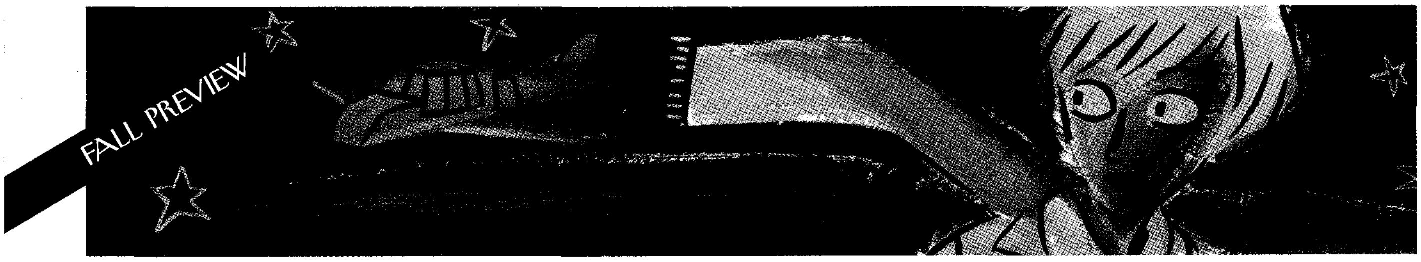
Catherine (Gwyneth Paltrow) appears to have inherited the mathematical gifts of her father, Robert (Anthony Hopkins). The question is, has he also handed down his fragility of mind? The kinship of brilliance and madness is not exactly the freshest topic for investigation, and John Madden's film, adapted from David Auburn's play, doesn't bring much to the party. There is suspense, of a kind, when a new mathematical proof of startling ambition—and uncertain provenance—is found in Robert's desk after his death, but apart from that the movie unfolds in a mood of worrisome glumness. When Catherine's non-geeky sister Claire (Hope Davis) arrives from New York for the funeral, we are meant to find her mean and brittle, but there is much to be said for her exasperation, and, as is so often the case, what struck theatre audiences as smart and provoking winds up onscreen looking smug. With Jake Gyllenhaal as a math graduate and part-time drummer, who would be well advised not to give up his day job.—*A.L.* (9/19/05) (In wide release.)

RED EYE

Rachel McAdams plays a young hotel manager, and Cillian Murphy plays a handsome snake who ensnares her in a terrorist plot. Wes Craven directed this nearly perfect little thriller (the running time is eighty-five minutes) with a scrupulous attention to small physical details and not a wasted shot or an excessive emotion. Once it gets going, it's mesmerizing. Screenplay by Carl Ellsworth.—*D.D.* (9/12/05) (In wide release.)

SEPARATE LIES

While James Manning (Tom Wilkinson), a London corporate lawyer, is working late, his wife, Anne (Emily Watson), gives a cocktail party at their Buckinghamshire manse. That evening, their housekeeper's husband is killed in a hit-and-run accident while bicycling home; the car that struck



DUPUY-BERBERIAN

CLASSICAL MUSIC

A number of classical music's hardiest survivors stand out this fall—none more than Leon Botstein, who makes a surprising début at New York City Opera on Oct. 6 leading the first local staging in nine decades of Paul Dukas's "Ariane et Barbe-Bleue." Eve Queler celebrates her thirty-fifth season at Carnegie Hall on Nov. 13 with a repeat of the Opera Orchestra of New York's first offering, "William Tell," a heroic opera that reminds us that Rossini was more than a confectioner of comedies; Marcello Giordani leads the cast.

SYMPHONY SPACES

Marin Alsop, the American-music expert who has become the first female music director of a major U.S. orchestra, will guest-conduct the New York Philharmonic in a round of concerts starting Oct. 14; the first of four performances of Elliott Carter's music by the Philharmonic will begin with Lorin Maazel conducting the early, Coplandesque "Holiday Overture" (Sept. 29).

OPERA SEASON

City Opera is offering Richard Rodney Bennett's "The Mines of Sulphur," a surprise hit at Glimmerglass Opera in 2004 (Oct. 23), along with the New York première of Rachel Portman's "The Little Prince," based on the children's classic by Saint-Exupéry, on Nov. 12. The Metropolitan Opera offers the world première of "An American Tragedy" (after the Theodore Dreiser novel), by Tobias Picker, America's most bankable opera composer, on Dec. 2, with a cast that includes Patricia Racette, Susan Graham, Dolora Zajik, and Nathan Gunn. The schedule also includes a new production of "Roméo et Juliette" with Natalie Dessay, beginning on Nov. 14.

Renée Fleming will take the title role in Strauss's "Daphne" on Oct. 15 at Carnegie Hall. Otherwise, it's a veritable Mahler festival, with performances of the Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Symphonies (conducted by James Levine, Daniel Barenboim, and Christoph Eschenbach, respectively) during November. Colin Davis fans will flock to the opening night of Lincoln Center's Great Performers series (Sept. 28), the first of three performances with the conductor and the London Symphony Orchestra.

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FALL PREVIEW

MOVIES

This fall, some of the best acting will in fact be impersonating. In "Capote" (Sept. 30), Philip Seymour Hoffman stars as the impish author and celebrity; Joaquin Phoenix is country music's Man in Black, Johnny Cash, in "Walk the Line" (Nov. 18); and, in "The Libertine" (December), Johnny Depp plays the seventeenth-century poet John Wilmot, a.k.a. the Earl of Rochester.

PAGE TO SCREEN

Rob Marshall directs an adaptation of the best-seller "Memoirs of a Geisha" (Dec. 9), starring Ziyi Zhang. Jake Gyllenhaal and Heath Ledger star as gay cowboys in Ang Lee's "Brokeback Mountain" (Dec. 9), based on a short story by Annie Proulx. And "The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe" (Dec. 9), adapted from C. S. Lewis's fantasy novel, stars Tilda Swinton, Jim Broadbent, and, as the voice of Aslan the lion, Liam Neeson.

SIX-HUNDRED-POUND GORILLAS

Peter Jackson follows his immensely successful "Lord of the Rings" trilogy with his immensely expensive remake of "King Kong" (Dec. 14), starring Naomi Watts and Jack Black. Tony Kushner co-wrote Steven Spielberg's "Munich" (Dec. 23), about the massacre of eleven Israeli athletes at the 1972 Olympics. And there are also two hit musicals coming to theatres: Chris Columbus directs Jonathan Larson's rock opera, "Rent" (Nov. 23), with Rosario Dawson and Taye Diggs, while Nathan Lane and Matthew Broderick reprise their roles in Mel Brooks's adaptation of his hit Broadway show, "The Producers" (Dec. 21), which was itself an adaptation of a movie and has now completed the circle of life.

LOVE STORIES

In Cameron Crowe's "Elizabethtown" (Oct. 14), a young man (Orlando Bloom) and woman (Kirsten Dunst) fall for each other at a Kentucky funeral. Noah Baumbach's "The Squid and the Whale" (Oct. 5) stars Jeff Daniels and Laura Linney as Park Slope parents splitting up circa 1986. And Woody Allen departs from his cinematic love affair with New York City in "Match Point" (Dec. 25), which is set in London and stars Scarlett Johansson and Jonathan Rhys-Meyers.

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him belongs to the local lord's scion, Bill Bule (Rupert Everett), who is seducing Anne. James is ready to turn him in but then learns that she, not he, was driving. In this witless melodrama written and directed by Julian Fellowes (the actor and Oscar-winning screenwriter of "Gosford Park"), Wilkinson's absurdly fusty performance could be an audition for "Spamalot," Everett is less subtle in villainy than Snidely Whiplash, and, for most of the film, Watson is just walking through. If the actors weren't British, this would have gone straight to cable.—*Richard Brody* (In wide release.)

SHERMAN'S MARCH
In Ross McElwee's New South, the word "reconstruction" no longer suggests carpetbaggers and the Ku Klux Klan, but eye-bag surgery and fanny tucks. That's just one of the observations to be gleaned from this random, sprawling, yet cunning and ruefully uproarious docu-comedy from 1986. It's about what happens when the Southern-born, Cambridge-based McElwee sets out to make a documentary about Sherman's March—and his girlfriend breaks up with him just before he heads South. He trips through Dixie anyway, and chronicles the romantic farce and anguish that ensue.—*Michael Sragow* (Museum of Modern Art; Sept. 23 and Sept. 25.)

SOME LIKE IT HOT
A comedy set in the Prohibition era, with transvestism, impotence, role confusion, and borderline inversion—and all hilariously innocent, though always on the brink of really disastrous double-entendre. Tony Curtis and Jack Lemmon are the musicians who witness the St. Valentine's Day Massacre and then hide out from the mobsters by disguising themselves as women and joining an all-girl band. Marilyn Monroe and Joe E. Brown are their somewhat confused love partners. Curtis demonstrates a parodistic gift with an imitation of Cary Grant (which he went on doing for years afterward), and Lemmon is demoniacally funny—he really gives in to women's clothes, and begins to think of himself as a sexy girl. Monroe gives perhaps her most characteristic performance, which means that she's both charming and embarrassing; Brown is inspired, the way he was years before in Max Reinhardt's movie of "A Midsummer Night's Dream," when he made some of us weep from laughter. Directed (unevenly) by Billy Wilder, who also collaborated on the screenplay with I. A. L. Diamond. For collectors of useless movie memorabilia: in one of the earlier versions of this material, a German musical film, the orchestra girls were called the Alpine Violets. Released in 1959.—*P.K.* (Museum of the Moving Image; Sept. 24-25.)

THUMBSUCKER
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (In wide release.)

TOUCH THE SOUND
This beautifully structured documentary directed by Thomas Riedelsheimer ("Rivers and Tides"), about the Scottish percussionist Evelyn Glennie, manages to be both meditative and exciting, very much like Glennie's music itself. Glennie is profoundly deaf, but she hears profoundly—not just rhythms and vibrations but the subtlest of tones as well—as she describes in terms at once mystical and firmly sensate. Glennie's day job is as a featured musician performing commissioned works with symphony orchestras, but the film follows her on a yearlong improvisational journey around the world—collaborating with Fred Frith in a huge, resonant abandoned sugar factory in Cologne; playing solo in Grand Central Station and at the Guggenheim; and jamming with a Kodo drum group in Fuji City.—*Ken Marks* (BAM Rose Cinemas and IFC Center.)

TRANSPORTER 2
The action director Louis Leterrier unleashes ninety-two stuntmen in eighty-eight minutes in his latest film, a frenetic sequel to the 2002 hit. Jason Statham returns as the icy hazardous-mission chauffeur who, this time, must rescue the son of a wealthy client. The screenplay is laughable, but the stunts are fabulous and Statham brings a sexy gravity to the absurd situations. With the newcomer Kate Nauta as a lingerie-clad assassin whose Uzis do all the talking.—*B.D.* (In wide release.)

2046
The latest and grandest work from Wong Kar-wai has the form of a sequel to "In the Mood for Love" but is also an amplification of its rhapsodic themes. Tony Leung plays Chow, a writer who moves into a small Hong Kong hotel, befriends the daughter of the owner (Faye Wong), and gradually works his way through a number of equally beautiful women, including a neighboring call girl (Zhang Ziyi) and a gambler with a black glove (Gong Li). "Her past was like the glove she always wore—a mystery," the narrator confides, and therein lies both the enchantment and the niggle of the film. Everything here is made mysterious under compulsion; the gorgeousness of the photography, like the ceaseless throb of the score, throws a veil over each detail, until not just the characters but the settings, too, begin to merge into one another. There are surges into science fiction (courtesy of a story that Chow is writing), but they seem no less anesthetized than the smoky world of his girlfriends. What they see in the guy is anybody's guess. In Cantonese, Japanese, and Mandarin.—*A.L.* (8/22/05) (In wide release.)

STEPHEN KRONINGER

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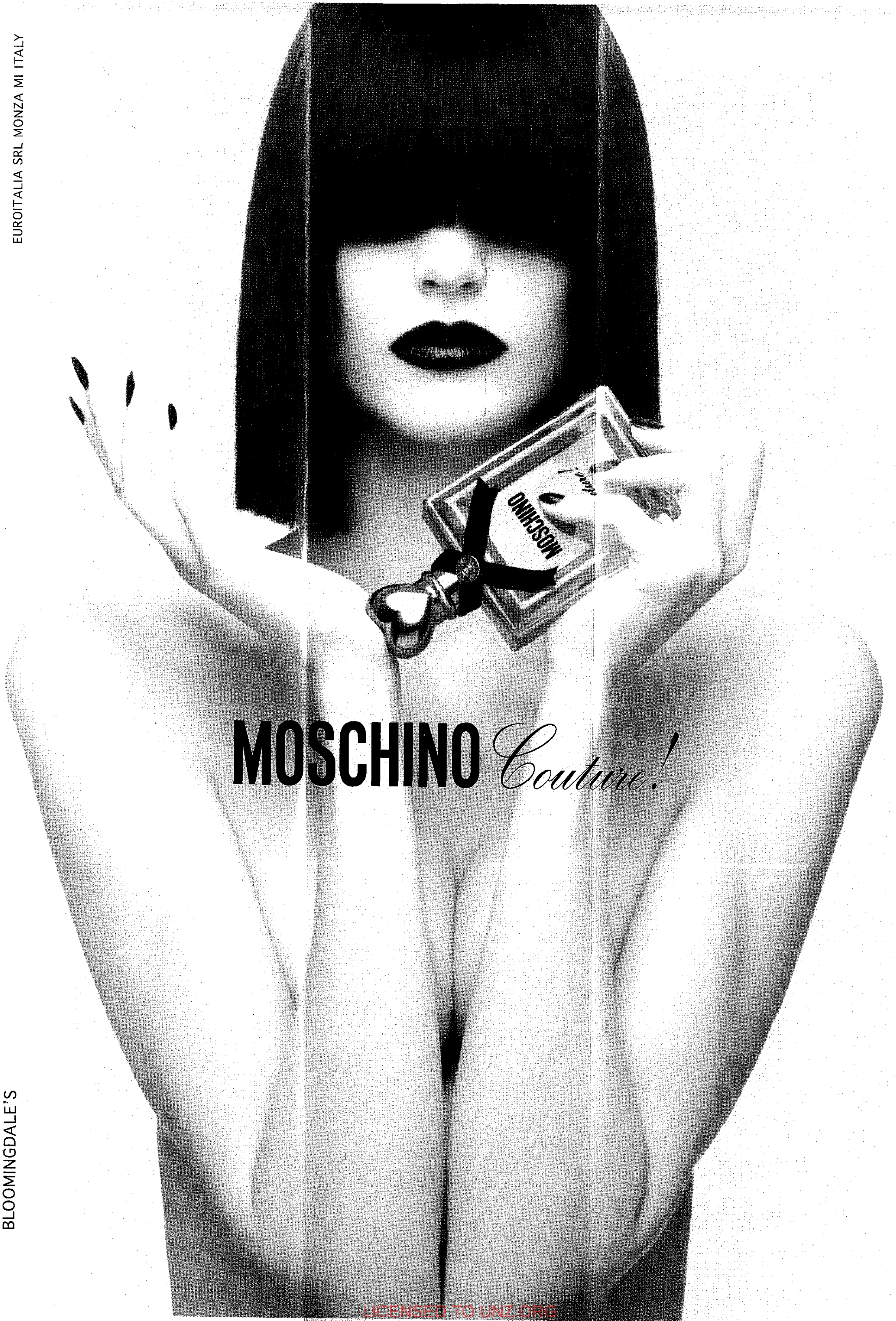
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Couture!
MOSCHINO Couture!

BLOOMINGDALE'S

AN UNFINISHED LIFE
Lasse Hallström's gently directed new drama is well intentioned and watchable, but there's a warmed-over feeling about it that makes one's interest droop. It may be only a quirk of scheduling (this Miramax release has been on the shelf for a while), but the relationship between a gruff, elderly Robert Redford (a Wyoming ranch owner) and a rueful Morgan Freeman comes awfully close to the relationship between a gruff, elderly Clint Eastwood and a rueful Freeman in "Million Dollar Baby." Jennifer Lopez, giving a decent performance, turns up as Redford's daughter-in-law, whom he detests because he thinks she's responsible for the death of his son. There's also a big bear, and the theme is that you have to forgive both bears and yourself before you can forgive other people.—*D.D.* (In wide release.)

WEDDING CRASHERS
Jeremy (Vince Vaughn) and John (Owen Wilson), a pair of divorce mediators, spend their summer weekends rolling up to the weddings of people they don't know and becoming the life and the soul of the party. The director, David Dobkin, and the writers, Steve Faber and Bob Fisher, kick off with a hectic montage of good will, and the first twenty minutes are rabid with simple pleasure. Then Jeremy and John hit a swish society affair, in which the Treasury Secretary, William Cleary (Christopher Walken), is marrying off one of his daughters, leaving two more (Rachel McAdams and Isla Fisher) to be ogled by our heroes, whereupon the fizz—and the generosity—starts to leak away. Thank heaven for the leading men—especially Vaughn, a hopped-up Gary Cooper who shoots his mouth off with such scattershot brio that he flubs the occasional word, or picks an overheated one ("Erroneous! Erroneous!"), or forgets to pause for breath. This is a dumb-ass picture about dumb-ass men. Still, sometimes ten per cent of your brain is just enough.—*A.L.* (7/25/05) (In wide release.)

THE WEEPING MEADOW
Another grand and glacial enterprise from the veteran Greek director Theo Angelopoulos. The fact that it launches a projected trilogy makes it all the more forbidding. The action (though that's not the first word that springs to mind) begins in 1919, with a band of Greek refugees returning to Thessalonika. From here on, their lives seem little better than provisional; indeed, they seem as unsurprised to find their houses under water, after a flood, as they are by the regular gusts of snow and rain that beat upon the clay-colored landscape. Whether the actors are anything other than figures in it—whether the director honestly believes in the ability, or even the right, of performance to do more than flavor a film—is open to question, and viewers of meagre patience are unlikely to last the course. Chronologically, the movie stretches through the Second World War and beyond, although history is not so much confronted as glimpsed in doorways or overheard in the dark. Through it wanders a group of travelling musicians, and, if anything binds the film together, it is the thread of their melancholy tunes. In Greek.—*A.L.* (9/19/05) (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

Also Playing

BALZAC AND THE LITTLE CHINESE SEAMSTRESS: Cinema Village. **JUST LIKE HEAVEN:** In wide release. **THE MAN:** In wide release. **MUSIC FROM THE INSIDE OUT:** Cinema Village. **ONE BRIGHT SHINING MOMENT:** Quad Cinema. **PIGGIE:** Pioneer Theatre. **THE THING ABOUT MY FOLKS:** In wide release. **TIM BURTON'S CORPSE BRIDE:** In wide release.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES
32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (212-505-5181)—"New Filmmakers." Sept. 21 at 8:15: "Escape Artists" (2005, Michael Laurence). ♦ Special screening. Sept. 22 at 7: "Smouldering Fires" (1925, Clarence Brown; silent). ♦ "*The Onion* Presents." Sept. 22 at 8: "Cry-Baby" (1990, John Waters). ♦ The Seventh Annual New York Turkish Film Festival. Sept. 24 at 5: "G.O.R.A." (2004, Omer Faruk Sorak; in Turkish). ♦ Sept. 24 at 8: "Head-On" (2004, Fatih Akin; in Turkish and German). ♦ Sept. 25 at 5: "The Ivy Mansion-Life" (2003, Abdullah Oguz; in Turkish). ♦ Sept. 25 at 8: "Lovelorn" (2005, Yavuz Turgul; in Turkish). ♦ Sept. 26 at 8: "Lobster Pot" (1995, Yavuz Ozkan; in Turkish). ♦ Sept. 27 at 8: "En Garde" (2004, Ayse Polat; in German). ♦ "Logos Film Lectures." Sept. 24 at 1: "Mamma Roma" (1962, Pier Paolo Pasolini; in Italian), followed by a talk by Stanley Aronowitz. ♦ "Essential Cinema." Sept. 24 at 6 and Sept. 25 at 7: "L'Atalante" (1934, Jean Vigo; in French). ♦ Sept. 25 at 5: "À Propos de Nice" (1930, Vigo; in French), "Taris, Roi de l'Eau" (1931, Vigo; in French), and "Zéro de Conduite" (1933, Vigo; in French). ♦ "Storefront Films." Sept. 27 at 7:30: "Trans:It—The Documentary Cycle" (2004, Bartololmeo Pietromarchi).

"Piggie," co-written and directed by Alison Bagnall (the co-writer of "Buffalo 66"), is playing at the Pioneer Theatre.

YUKO SHIMIZU

BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-636-4100)—"Cinema Tropical." Sept. 21 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "I Am Cuba: The Siberian Mammoth" (2004, Vicente Ferraz; in Portuguese). ♦ Through Oct. 6: "Double Dutch." Sept. 22 at 7: "The Damned and the Sacred" (2003, Jos de Putter; in Dutch). ♦ Sept. 27 at 7 and 9:30: "Go West, Young Man!" (2003, Peter Delpeut and Mart Dominicus; in English and Dutch). ♦ "Notorious Duo: Hitchcock and Cary Grant." Sept. 23 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "To Catch a Thief" (1955, Alfred Hitchcock). ♦ Sept. 24-25 at 3, 6, and 9: "North by Northwest" (1959, Hitchcock). ♦ "Party Girls and Outlaws: Nicholas Ray." Sept. 26 at 6:50 and 9:15: "Hot Blood" (1956).

FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—In revival. Sept. 21-23 and Sept. 25-27 at 1: "I Am Cuba: The Siberian Mammoth" (2004, Vicente Ferraz; in Portuguese). ♦ Sept. 21-27 at 2:45, 5:20, and 8: "I Am Cuba" (1964, Mikhail Kalatozov; in Russian, Spanish, and English).

FLORENCE GOULD HALL
55 E. 59th St. (212-355-6160)—"Cinéma Tuesdays." Sept. 27 at 12:30 and 4: "Cross Portrait of Simone de Beauvoir and Jean-Paul Sartre" (1967, Madeleine Gobeil-Noël; in French).

IFC CENTER
323 Sixth Ave., at W. 3rd St. (212-924-7771)—"Weekend Classics." Sept. 23-25 at noon: "Jules and Jim" (1962, François Truffaut; in French).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9480)—"Early Autumn: Masterworks of Japanese Cinema from the National Film Center, Tokyo." All films are in Japanese. Sept. 21 at 6: "The Rikisha Man" (1943, Hiroshi Inagaki). ♦ Sept. 21 at 8: "Judo Saga" (1943, Akira Kurosawa). ♦ Through Sept. 28: The films of Ross McElwee. Sept. 21 at 6:30 and Sept. 25 at 5: "Bright Leaves" (2003). ♦ Sept. 22 at 6 and Sept. 24 at 8:45: "Space Coast" (1979). ♦ Sept. 22 at 8 and Sept. 24 at 6:15: "Something to Do with the Wall" (1991). ♦ Sept. 23 and Sept. 26 at 6: "Charleen" (1978) and "Backyard" (1984). ♦ Sept. 23 at 8:15 and Sept. 25 at 2: "Sherman's March" (†). ♦ Sept. 24 at 2 and Sept. 26 at 8: "Time Indefinite" (1994). ♦ Sept. 24 at 4:30: "Six O'Clock News" (1996). ♦ Through Oct. 8: " 'Swoon': Ten Years of Killer Films." Sept. 22 at 5:45 and Sept. 25 at 2: "Safe" (1995, Todd Haynes). ♦ Sept. 22 at 8:30: "The Notorious Bettie Page" (2005, Mary Harron). ♦ Sept. 23 at 6:30: A program of short films, including "Dottie Gets Spanked" (1993, Haynes). ♦ Sept. 23 at 8:30: "Go Fish" (1994, Rose Troche). ♦ Sept. 24 at 2: "Postcards from America" (1994, Steve McLean). ♦ Sept. 24 at 4: "Swoon" (1992, Tom Kalin). ♦ Sept. 24 at 6:30: "Office Killer" (1997, Cindy Sherman). ♦ Sept. 24 at 8:30: "A Dirty Shame" (2004, John Waters). ♦ Sept. 25 at 5: "Far from Heaven" (2002, Haynes).

MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—Special event. Sept. 22 at 8: "Fatal Attraction" (1987, Adrian Lyne), followed by a talk with the actress Glenn Close. ♦ "Fist and Sword: Martial Arts Film Classics." Sept. 23 at 7:30: "36 Chambers of Shaolin" (1978, Liu Chia-Liang; in English, Cantonese, and Mandarin). ♦ Through Nov. 13: "Some Like It Wilder: The Complete Billy Wilder." Sept. 24 at 2: "A Foreign Affair" (1948). ♦ Sept. 24-25 at 4:30: "Some Like It Hot" (†). ♦ Sept. 25 at 2: "Stalag 17" (1953). ♦ Repertory nights. Sept. 24 at 7:30 and Sept. 25 at 7: "Beauty and the Beast" (†).

THE NEW YORK FILM FESTIVAL
Lincoln Center (212-875-5050)—Most screenings will be held at Alice Tully Hall. See www.filmlinc.com for details. Sept. 23 at 8:15 and 9: "Good Night, and Good Luck" (2005, George Clooney). ♦ Sept. 24 at 3 and Sept. 25 at 8:30: "The Death of Mr. Lazarescu" (2005, Cristi Puiu; in Romanian). ♦ Sept. 24 at 6:30: "Methadonia" (2005, Michel Negroponte). ♦ Sept. 24 at 9:15 and Sept. 25 at 12:15: "L'Enfant" (2005, Jean-Pierre Dardenne and Luc Dardenne; in French). ♦ Sept. 25 at 3: "Avenge But One of My

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Two Eyes" (2005, Avi Mograbi; in English, Arabic, and Hebrew). ♦ Sept. 25 at 6 and Sept. 26 at 9: "Bubble" (2005, Steven Soderbergh). ♦ Sept. 26 at 6: "The Squid and the Whale" (2005, Noah Baumbach). ♦ Sept. 27 at 6: "I Am" (2005, Dorota Kedzierzawska; in Polish). ♦ Sept. 27 at 9: "Capote" (2005, Bennett Miller). ♦ Sidebar to the New York Film Festival: "The Beauty of the Everyday: Japan's Shochiku Company at 110." All films are in Japanese. Sept. 24 at 7 and Sept. 25 at 6: "The Hidden Blade" (2005, Yoji Yamada). ♦ Sept. 25 at 12 noon: "Nezumi Kozo" (2005, Noda Hideki). ♦ Sept. 25 at 2:30: "Souls on the Road" (1921, Minoru Murata; silent). ♦ Sept. 25 at 4:15: "Ornamental Hairpin" (1941, Hiroshi Shimizu). ♦ Sept. 25 at 9: "The Castle of Sand" (1974, Yoshitaro Nomura). ♦ Sept. 26 at 3 and 6: "The Neighbor's Wife and Mine" (1931, Heinosuke Gosho). ♦ Sept. 26 at 4:30 and Sept. 27 at 2:30: "Our Neighbor Miss Yae" (1934, Yasujiro Shimazu). ♦ Sept. 27 at 4: "Woman of the Mist" (1936, Gosho). ♦ Sept. 27 at 6:15: "A Story of Floating Weeds" (1934, Yasujiro Ozu; silent). ♦ Sept. 27 at 8:30: "Every Night Dreams" (1934, Mikio Naruse; silent).

SUNSHINE CINEMA

143 E. Houston St. (212-330-8182)—Midnight movies. Sept. 23-24: "The Godfather" (1972, Francis Ford Coppola).

THALIA THEATRE

Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. (212-864-5400)—"Current Cinema." Sept. 25 at 5 and Sept. 27 at 9: "Me and You and Everyone We Know" (2005, Miranda July). ♦ "Thalia Film Classics." Sept. 25 at 7 and Sept. 27 at 6: "Ikiru" (1952, Akira Kurosawa; in Japanese).

WALTER READE THEATRE

Lincoln Center (212-875-5600)—"An Evening with Rip Torn." Sept. 21 at 6:30: A double feature of "Forty Shades of Blue" (2005, Ira Sachs) and "Payday" (†), along with a conversation with Rip Torn and Ira Sachs. ♦ Remembering Susan Sontag. Sept. 22 at 6:15: "Duet for Cannibals" (1969, Susan Sontag; in English and Swedish). ♦ Sept. 22 at 8:45: "Brother Carl" (1971, Sontag).

READINGS AND TALKS

STEVE MUMFORD

The New York-based artist talks about his new book, "Baghdad Journal." (Barnes & Noble, Sixth Ave. at 21st St. No tickets necessary. Sept. 21 at 7.)

"ACCLAIMED/EMERGING"

This series, which pairs established poets with newer ones, gets under way for the fall with Forrest Gander and Chase Twichell, who will be joined by Dana Goodyear, a writer for this magazine. (New School, 66 W. 12th St. For more information, call 212-254-9628. Sept. 21 at 7:30.)

"PINEWOOD DIALOGUE"

Glenn Close visits the Museum of the Moving Image for a talk with its chief curator, David Schwartz, and a screening of her 1987 thriller, "Fatal Attraction." (35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria. 718-784-4520. Sept. 22 at 8.)

HILARY SPURLING

The biographer reads from her latest work, "Matisse the Master: A Life of Henri Matisse: The Conquest of Colour, 1909-1954." (192 Books, 192 Tenth Ave., at 21st St. For reservations, call 212-255-4022. Sept. 24 at 7.)

"CONSIDERING THE RADIANCE"

A tribute to the late poet A. R. Ammons, featuring Roger Gilbert, Alice Fulton, Richard Howard, David Lehman, and Harold Bloom. (Housing Works Used Book Café, 126 Crosby St. No tickets necessary. Sept. 26 at 7.)

HARRY BERGER, JR.

The eighty-year-old West Coast-based literary critic and art historian is in town for a lecture series titled "Fictions of the Pose." The first covers seventeenth-century Dutch art (Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, 1 E. 78th St., Sept. 26); the second talk, in the Fales Reading Room (Bobst Library, New York University, 70 Washington Sq. S., Sept. 29), addresses the contemporary relevance of Shakespeare's "Henry V" (wayward prince becomes king, wages war); the third is a close reading of Rembrandt's "The Night Watch" (Institute of Fine Arts, Oct. 3); and the final lecture takes a fresh look at Shakespeare's Iago and Richard III (Fales Reading Room, Oct. 6). (For reservations, which are required, call the New York Institute for the Humanities, 212-998-2100. All talks begin at 6.)

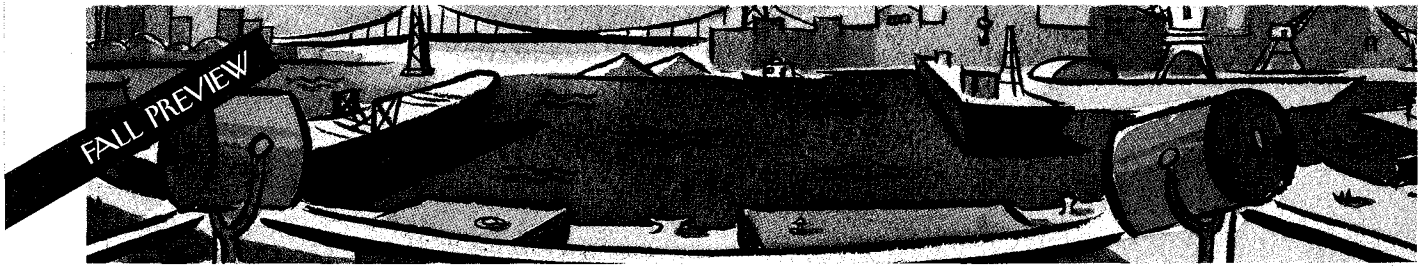
ABOVE AND BEYOND

QUEENS COUNTY FAIR

Greenmarkets and Whole Foods may be all the rage in Manhattan, and Brooklyn may have its fabled food coöp, but Queens can do the other boroughs one better—it has a working farm. This weekend the forty-seven-acre site is home to a traditional county fair, complete with livestock and produce competitions and pie-eating and corn-husking contests. (Queens County Farm Museum, 73-50 Little Neck Parkway, Floral Park. 718-347-3276. Sept. 24-25 from 11 to 6.)

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

Even if you don't intend to buy anything, it's worth stopping by the **Sotheby's** Sept. 21-22 auction of Chinese decorative and fine art works just to take in the resplendent aesthetic achievements of the Middle Kingdom. The items range from the minimal (a white-glazed Anhua moon flask, a vessel of subtle beauty) to the ornate (a pair of grotesque Tang-dynasty clay statues, earth spirits that threaten all who meet their gaze). On Sept. 22, the house will auction statuary and paintings glorifying Buddha, variously portrayed as a towering, mustachioed Afghan (in stone, circa second century), a multi-armed Chinese deity (bronze, fifteenth century), and in various other places and incarnations. On Sept. 27, the house sells, for charity, seventy-five Mickey Mouse statues—each seven hundred pounds, six feet tall, and uniquely designed. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 212-606-7000.) ♦ **Christie's** Sept. 23 sale of postwar and contemporary art has its own Zen-like gem: a diptych by Christo of "The Gates" serves as a rare relic of that grand, impermanent installation. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.)



MARCELLUS HALL

ABOVE AND BEYOND

The third annual Open House New York weekend (Oct. 8-9) gives ordinary folks access to intriguing and often off-limits parts of the five boroughs. The south side of Ellis Island, the interior of the Brooklyn Navy Yard, and the grounds of the Fresh Kills landfill are on the list, along with mansions in Manhattan and the Bronx (the Bartow-Pell Mansion, in Pelham Bay Park, is a Greek Revival marvel).

BOOK WORKS

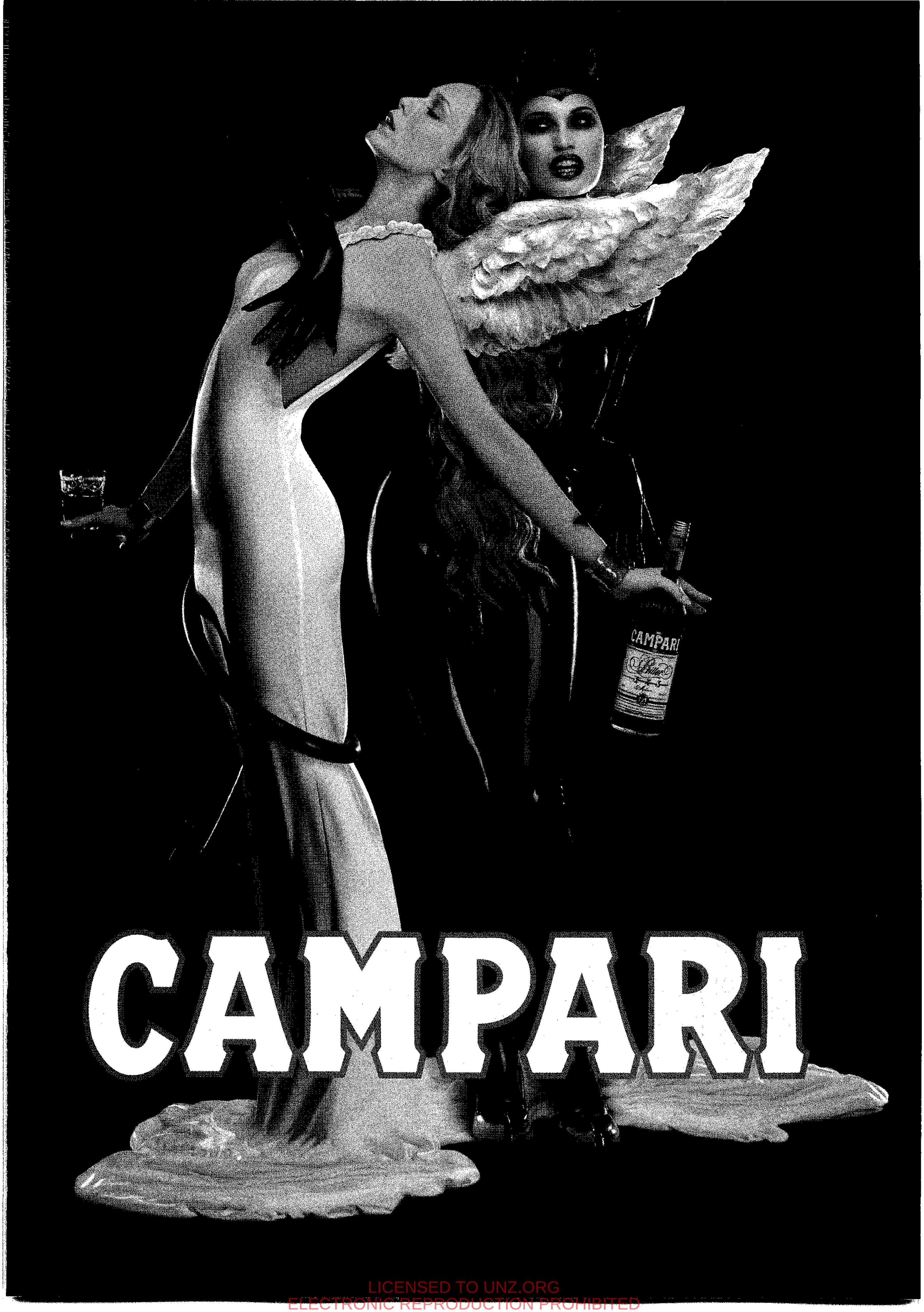
If a little knowledge is a dangerous thing, imagine the damage a whole book can do. The actor John Lithgow, the cookbook writer Mark Bittman, the curator Thelma Jackson, Fire Commissioner Nicholas Scoppetta, and countless others appear at Symphony Space on Oct. 22 to read from the books that changed their lives. Also, the poet Adrienne Rich reads from her work at Columbia University's Miller Theatre (Sept. 29), and Bill Clinton stops by the New York Public Library on Oct. 27 to discuss race relations with the African-American historian John Hope Franklin, whose new autobiography is titled "Mirror to America."

VAUDEVILLE NATION

An exhibition at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts opening on Nov. 8 traces the history of the highly influential, long-lost genre, with joke books, scripts, photographs, and other ephemera.

BID BUSINESS

Sotheby's, the more glamour-conscious of the two big auction houses, has a formidable lineup of celebrity auctions this fall, including items from the estates of Geoffrey Beene (Sept. 23-24) and Richard Avedon (Oct. 14). Christie's, the big winner in the Impressionist-modern and postwar-contemporary categories last spring, will present its evening sales on Nov. 1 and Nov. 8.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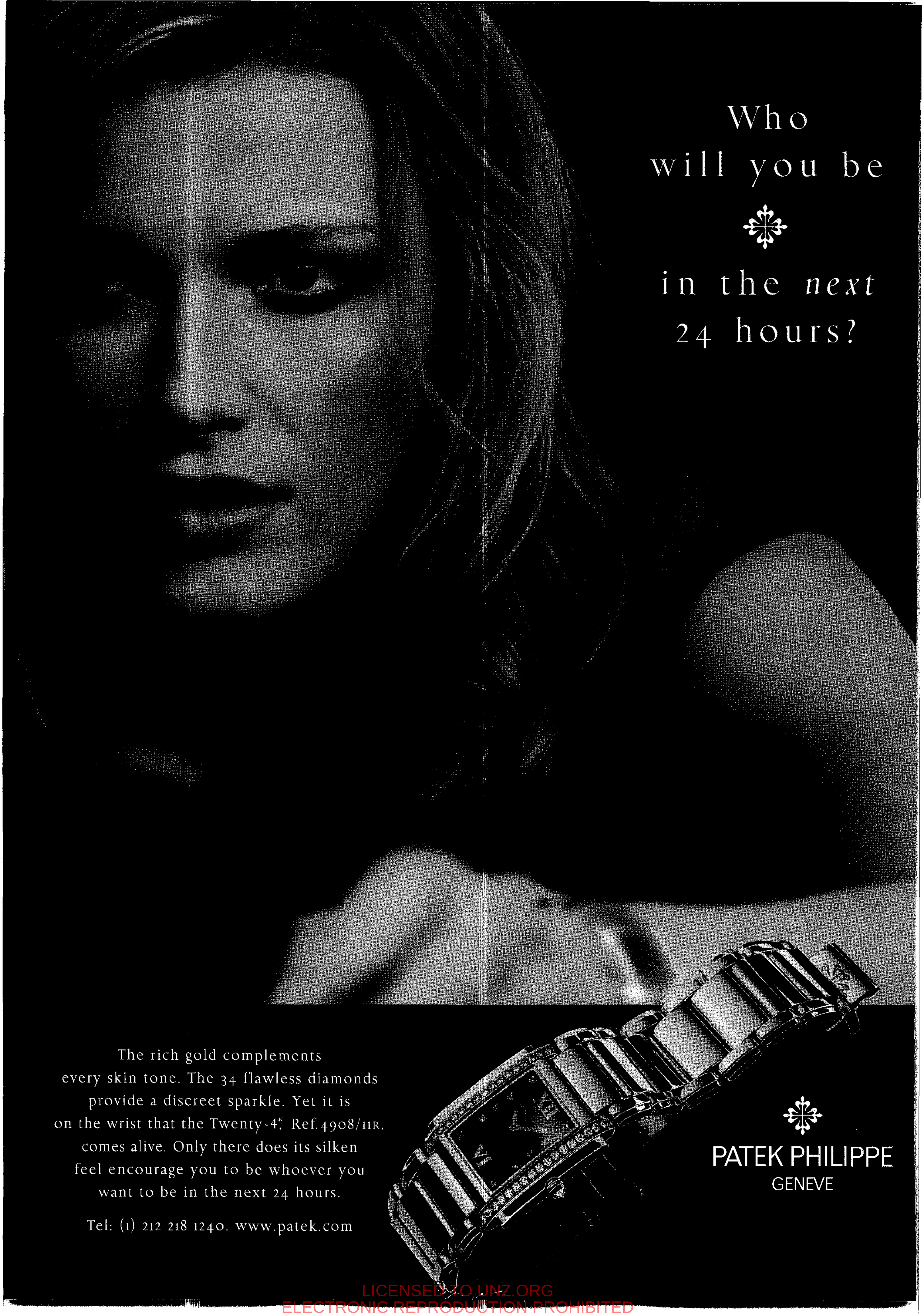
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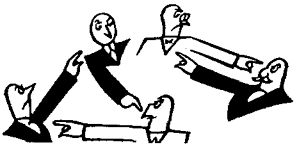
THE NEW YORKER

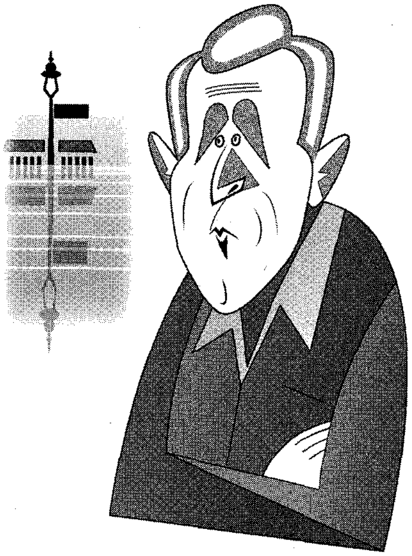
THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
INSURRECTION



As it becomes more possible to play what President Bush calls "the blame game" about the unnecessarily disastrous effect of Hurricane Katrina on New Orleans, it also becomes clear that the game divides fairly neatly into two parts: before and after. Before involves storm defenses not enhanced despite clear warnings of their inadequacy, wetlands not protected, evacuation buses not engaged, and Federal Emergency Management Agency units not deployed to the Gulf Coast in advance. After is about the week that began with the hurricane hitting and ended with the Superdome and the Convention Center emptied, National Guard troops on the street, supplies available, and the levee breaches repaired, and that included day after endless day of inexcusable, televised misery in between.

Most of what is likely to be known about before is already on the public record. After is a more shadowy matter, and the scraps of detail about it that have emerged so far make up a puzzling and incomplete picture. The Bush Administration realized after the storm what it should have realized before it: that the state and local authorities in Louisiana were not going to be able to handle the hurricane's aftermath effectively. Apparently, the Administration tried to persuade the governor of Louisiana, Kathleen Blanco, to issue an official request that the federal government take control of the Louisiana National Guard and the New Orleans police, but she refused, out of pride or mistrust or a desire to maintain some degree of control. Then the Administration considered sending active-duty federal troops to New Orleans to do what the National Guard and the police could not—make the streets and the evacuation centers safe and decent—and decided not to. Whatever its failings before the hurricane hit, the federal government could have greatly lessened the disaster if it had acted immediately afterward as a direct enforcer of the law. People suffered and died because it did not.



ILLUSTRATIONS BY ROBERT RISKO

All this backing and forthing about the powers of federal, state, and local governments has a long, redolent history that explains a lot not only about the aftermath of the hurricane but about the underlying conditions in New Orleans that so shocked auslander television viewers. Article I of the United States Constitution gives the federal government the power to "suppress insurrections." This has always been a touchy subject—especially in the South, and most especially during the Reconstruction period, after the biggest insurrection in American history had been successfully suppressed. The Insurrection Act of 1807 outlines the script that the Administration evidently wanted Governor Blanco to follow: a governor asks the President to federalize local law enforcement in order to suppress an insurrection; the President issues a proclamation ordering the "insurgents to disperse"; they don't; the cavalry rides to the rescue.

But the President has the option of sending in troops without being asked when the law isn't being enforced or the rights of a class of people are being denied—which was clearly the case in New Orleans, not just because crime was rampant but because so many people were trapped in hellish conditions. In 1992, President George H. W. Bush, who liked to build alliances before invading, sent federal troops to quell the

Los Angeles riots after the governor requested him to. In 1957 and 1963, however, Presidents Eisenhower and Kennedy sent troops to the South to enforce the civil rights of African-Americans without gubernatorial invitations. It's no accident that all three invocations of the Insurrection Act had to do with the American dilemma: throughout our history, the moments of greatest contention about federal power have involved race.

The Reconstruction period ended with a protracted and bloody conflict over the question of deploying federal troops in the South. In the Southern states with the largest black populations, organized terrorist groups arose that would do whatever it took, including murder, to insure election victories by the Democratic Party, which was dominated by unrepentant former Confederates. The best means of suppressing the terrorists and insuring free elections was to send in the Army. Congress made the use of troops easier or harder depending on who was in power in Washington. Laws passed in 1870 and 1871, the heyday both of the Ku Klux Klan and of Radical Republicanism, made it easier to use troops in the South; the post-Reconstruction Posse Comitatus Act of 1878—an attempt to eviscerate the Insurrection Act by requiring an act of Congress before federal troops could be used—made it more difficult. The issue of federal intervention and the issue of whether freed slaves and their descendants would fully be citizens were essentially the same. Reconstruction ended with the withdrawal of federal troops in 1877. They were withdrawn, supposedly, to restore normal governance in the former Confederate states, but the consequence was that those states, once there was nobody on hand to force them to obey the Constitution, took full citizenship away from African-Americans.

No state saw more conflict over federal power than Louisiana. A massacre of politically active blacks in New Orleans in the summer of 1866 helped set in motion the passage of constitutional amendments that made it illegal to deny civil rights and the right to vote to anyone on the basis of race. President Grant sent federal troops to the Red River Valley after notorious massacres there in 1873 and 1874; in 1874, federal troops were ordered to New Orleans after a Democratic white militia tried to overthrow the Republican state government; in 1875, federal troops marched onto the floor of the state legislature to restore the Republicans to power after another coup d'état by the Democrats. This last intervention was a pivotal event—not because it enforced order once and for all but because it horrified the nation, which in those days was not at all sure that it was in favor of Negro rights. Before long, federal intervention in the South in the name of civil rights became a taboo so absolute that no President violated it for more than three-quarters of a century.

This is not ancient history. The New Orleans ghettos that America got an oblique look at after the hurricane grew up during the time when the South, having successfully resisted the federal government, imposed a secondary status on blacks. In the nineteen-sixties, the two major political parties reversed their Reconstruction-era roles: the Democrats embraced civil rights, and the South became Republican. Whoever in the Bush Administration hesitated to invoke the Insurrection Act was partaking of a reflexive anti-governmentalism that pervades the Administration. (This Bush Administration isn't hung up on building alliances, but its high-spirited willingness to use force wilts, evidently, inside domestic borders.) If there was also a political calculation that many Republicans, especially Southerners, would not react happily to the sight of troops entering Louisiana over the objections of local officials, this was hardly the moment for it, and the calculation turns out to have been wrong, anyway.

Is it too much to hope for that the disaster might reëstablish in the national mind the link between race and governance? The shock that non-New Orleanians experienced at what they saw was genuine, but memories have faded to the point that people no longer make what was once an obvious connection between a disabled federal government and bad outcomes for African-Americans. Seeing the two together after Katrina ought to make us understand how literally deadly are the effects of a reluctance to use government. Perhaps even the Bush Administration will reconsider.

—Nicholas Lemann

DEPARTMENT OF PLONK
A VERY GOOD YEAR

One day in 1977, while his wife, Vera, was out doing errands, Latif Jiji, a professor of mechanical engineering at City College, stuck a small grapevine in the ground in the back yard of his town house, on East Ninety-second Street, between Park and Lex. The garden was ostensibly his wife's domain, which is why Latif did his planting on the sly, but it didn't take long before the vine, having absorbed all those rich Upper East Side nutrients (smog-flavored rain, decomposed poodle droppings, roach-killer runoff), grew conspicuously large.

"The way I look at it is Freudian," Vera, a retired English professor, said the other day. "A man gets a little stick, and it comes to dominate everything."

The grapevine is now a hundred feet long, stretching from the yard to the back of the house, up four stories, and across the roof; another few years and it should begin its descent toward the front stoop. It yields an average of more than four hundred pounds of Niagara grapes—that is, common green grapes—each year, enough for the Jijis to make about a hundred bottles of their own white wine. They call it Château Latif, and believe it to be the only Manhattan vintage in existence. "The Greeks, the Romans, the Ar-

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abs, they did short, horizontal vines, no more than six feet high," Latif said. "But not me. I have the tallest vine."

Latif, who is seventy-seven, grew up in Basra, Iraq, where his father was an amateur vintner. The fact that Latif ended up on the most densely settled island in North America, on a small lot situated above the I.R.T. subway, was not about to stop him from carrying on the family tradition; his wine would make do with a Park Avenue *terroir.*

"It's got a hint of carbon monoxide, No. 6 train, and hot-dog water," Jeff Ourvan, Latif's son-in-law, said, as he popped a ripe grape in his mouth. Ourvan was up on the roof, participating in the family's annual September harvest, dropping sticky bundles of grapes into a plastic bag and trying not to let any strays fall down the neighbor's chimney. (The previous resident was not a fan of the vineyard, and kept close watch to insure that no leaves extended beyond the property line.)

A dozen or more pickers, spanning three generations, worked for hours, lowering baskets from the roof via pulley, and leaning out windows to clip fruit-bearing stems. On the ground, others weighed the incoming loads by stepping onto a bathroom scale, bags in hand, and subtracting their own weight. Then they soaked the soot-covered grapes in tap water, and delivered them by the laundry basketful to a hand-cranked metal crusher in the back yard. After the crusher came a wooden presser—and a steady stream of grape juice, which was collected in a janitorial bucket and a plastic wastebasket, before being transferred to five-gallon glass jugs.

By two o'clock, the vine had been picked bare. It was the smallest harvest in fifteen years, Latif said, owing perhaps to lack of rain and to the new neighbor's renovations, which he believed had damaged some of the vine's roots. The consensus was that this year's crop was sweeter and more citrusy than last year's. An appointed "chemistry team" huddled around a patio table with a hydrometer, a calculator, and a bag of supermarket sugar.

In the late afternoon, a thirsty guest wondered if he might try some wine. A chilled bottle from 2000 was uncorked and was promptly deemed refreshing. It had the sweet, slightly metallic bite of a retsina or a Riesling.

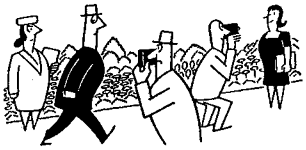
"Would you say this is a dry wine?" one of Latif's daughters asked.

"No, it's the opposite of dry—it's sweet," one of her sisters replied.

Night fell, and the family assembled inside for a dinner of tomato-and-eggplant casserole and to toast another harvest. A bottle of '97 Château Latif was opened. No one could quite remember or agree whether that was a good year or not.

—*Ben McGrath*

ON THE TOWN
A GENTLEMAN RETURNS



William Eggleston, the supposedly reclusive photographer, was in town the other day from Tennessee, having a grand time seeing and being seen. On the agenda was the première of a documentary, "William Eggleston in the Real World," and a reception for a new show of old portraits that he had taken, in the seventies, of the Memphis demimonde—backsliders, barflies, easy women.

Earlier that afternoon, Eggleston, who is sixty-six, was at El Quijote, the sangria-and-lobster joint in the Chelsea Hotel, where he lived, on and off, for a couple of years with the model and Warhol protégée Viva. (Eggleston has been married to Rosa Dosset, a childhood friend, for forty-one years but has openly cultivated relationships with other women.) It's a little-known fact that he has spent a significant amount of time in New York, where, in 1976, MOMA gave him its first major one-man show of color photography.

"It's my favorite place, almost," he said of the Chelsea. "We go way back." He pointed toward an interior entrance to the restaurant. "See those double doors? They only open one way now, so that if you go out of here into the lobby you have to go out to the street to get in again. Back in the days, the hotel was full of undesirable people." Like who? "Me and the Sex Pistols."

Eggleston was dressed fastidiously: navy-blue suit, white shirt, slim navy-and-red spotted tie, leather lace-ups. He is exacting and gallant—he bowed upon greeting a woman, and took her hand in both of his—but is not averse to mischief. He appreciates back talk and expects to be entertained. When he isn't, his eyes go milky and he becomes quiet, his efforts at being amusing withering in direct proportion to the extent to which he is not amused. "I couldn't say" is a typical comment.

Suddenly, in a strong voice, he summoned a waiter: "Bring me a glass of champagne, please.

"I love a midafternoon drink," he said. "When I was growing up, we called them 'nooners.'" The waiter returned with a half-bottle of Moët, and Eggleston instructed him again. "Bring me, please, a tiny, tiny shot of crème de cassis.

"That's what I used to order," he said. "My favorite bartender here had a secret formula for a champagne cocktail. He would always turn away so I couldn't see what he was putting in." He was barely audible over a burst of flamenco guitar.

"Here's looking at you," he said.

He went on, "Viva and I are very close still. She'll call me and say, 'You won't believe what happened.' And I'll say, 'Oh, I can't imagine.' And she'll tell me about some household disaster, some fight with her landlord, or something."

Later, during a question-and-answer session at the movie's première, at Film Forum, Eggleston got shy again.

Q: "What do you think of New York?"

A: "Well." (*Almost a minute went by.*) "It's on the map."

The audience broke into indulgent laughter, humoring the rube savant. Eggleston's Southern-boy persona is almost as artfully constructed as his images—actually, he's travelled around the world. This year, he plans to visit the Far East, which he decided to see after dreaming about riding around Thailand in a taxi. "I'm headed to Bangkok," he said. "My son Winston and I, Nan Goldin, and Juergen Teller. It's gonna be a hell of a crew."

After the session, admirers swarmed to the front of the theatre. A man presented Eggleston with a deli bouquet of white tulips, and a woman, in a fit of either idolatry or entrepreneurial inspiration, asked him to take her picture with a cameraphone. He obliged.

Later, at the reception, at Cheim & Read gallery, things got loud and crowded, and Eggleston and some friends retreated to a private room. There was a low table set with a round tray: miniature cheesecakes (untouched), wine, water. The men

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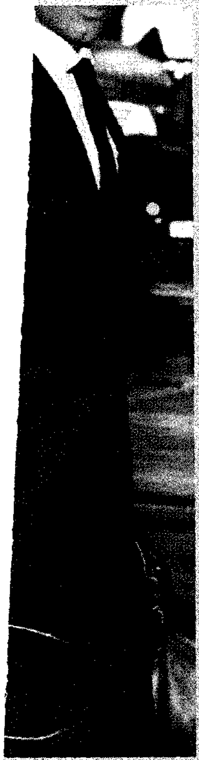

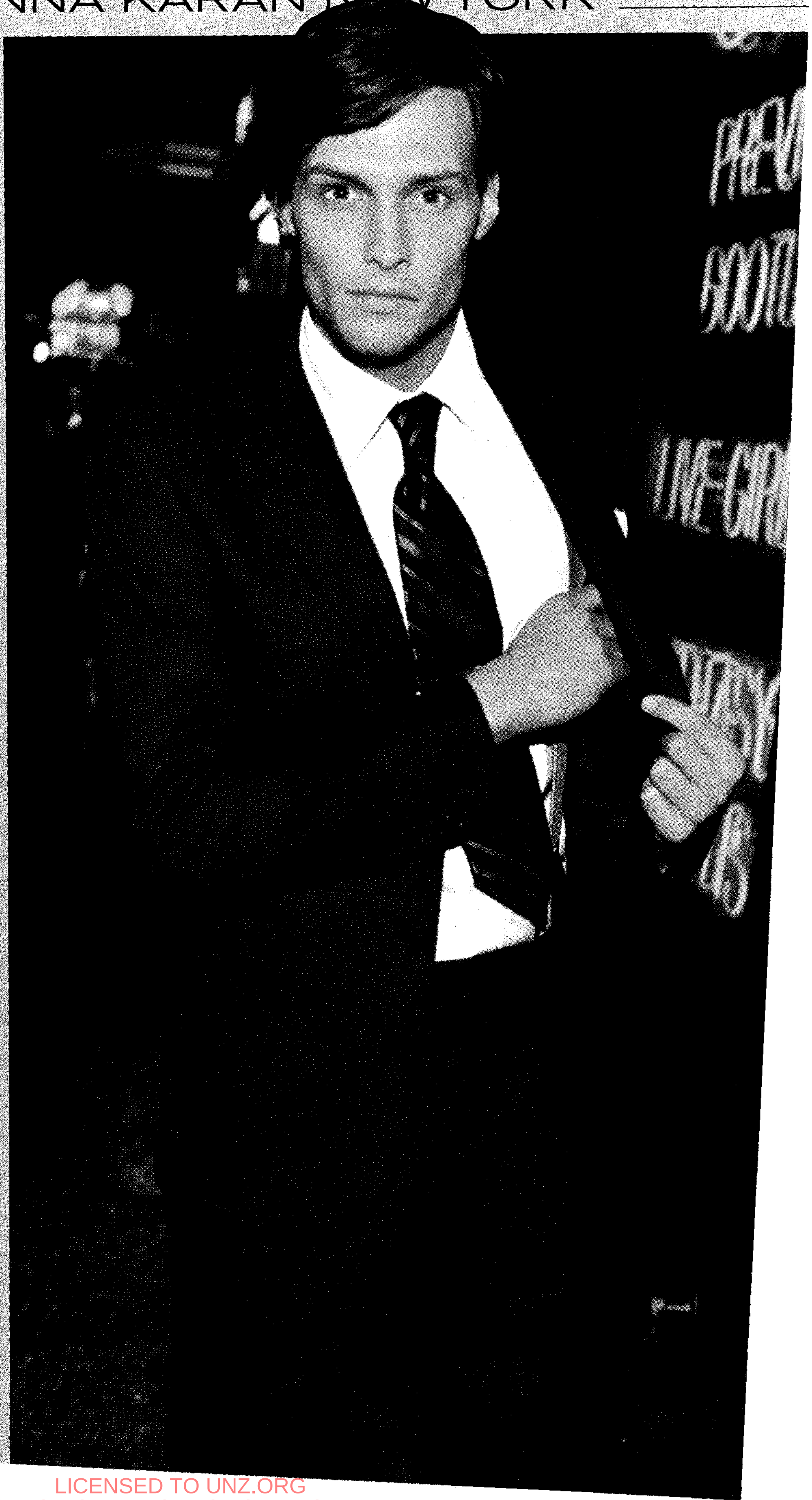

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were chain-smoking, lighting up cigarettes before they could stub out the old ones, talking about which woman in the world had the most beautiful underarms. It was a colorful picture.

—*Lauren Collins*

DEPT. OF LABOR
JOE HILL IN THE HAMPTONS

Any resort town's list of unwelcome visitors would have to include picketing workers and giant rodents. These days, East Hampton has both. Last month, aggrieved members of the Writers Guild of America East set up a picket line outside Wainscott Studios, a television-production facility, where "It's a Big, Big World," a new PBS children's show with a non-guild writing staff, is shooting. They brought with them a familiar labor mascot, a fifteen-foot-tall inflatable rat, on loan from the Musicians Local 802. Since then, demonstrators have been showing up every weekday at the studio, to chant slogans, demand negotiations, and shout one name over and over: Mitchell Kriegman.

Kriegman is the creator and producer of "It's a Big, Big World," which uses puppets to teach children about earth science. It is set in the rain forest, and its cast includes a sloth named Snook, a nervous anteater, a pair of marmosets, and a turtle with a map of the world on its shell. (There is no rat.) Last spring, Kriegman assembled a group of writers, many of whom had worked on his earlier show "Bear in the Big Blue House." Then, in May, Kriegman offered the writers a deal that paid a third of the W.G.A. minimum, without a guarantee of benefits, and they walked. Soon after, the guild put Kriegman on its strike list, and he brought in non-union writers. Among the scabs, the strikers say, were Kriegman's assistant and her sister, a former hairdresser, though Kriegman denies this.

One recent morning, a handful of writers milled in front of Wainscott Studios, carrying signs bearing such slogans as "Big, Big Pig." A succession of Hummers, Escalades, and BMW convertibles roared past the picket line, some of them honking in apparent solidarity at the sight of the hovering rat, with its red eyes, buck teeth, and scrofulous belly.

Amanda Bell, a W.G.A. organizer, tried to get things going with some chants from her days with the largely Spanish-speaking hotel and restaurant workers' union. "*Se ve, se siente—la unión está presente!*" she sang, but it didn't catch on. The writers themselves mostly shouted slogans of their own devising. Raye Lankford, who writes for the PBS animated series "Arthur," kept up a steady stream of patter through a bullhorn, veering from invective ("Who caused this problem? Mitchell Kriegman! Who can solve this problem? Mitchell Kriegman!") to pathos ("We're sending you love, Mitchell, because, obviously, you didn't get it as a child").

For the most part, though, Lankford improvised musical parodies, to reflect the standoff between Kriegman and the writers. These included "Mr. Sandman" ("Mitchell Kriegman—make us a deal"); "Wake Up, Little Susie" ("Wake up, Mitchell Kriegman"); "Feelings" ("Contracts, nothing more than contracts—missing from my table—since Mitchell Kriegman left"); "Alfie" ("What's it all about, Mit-chell? Is it just for the money you live?"); and "All I Want for Christmas" ("All I want for Christmas is a deal from Mitchell . . . with health insurance and a pension").

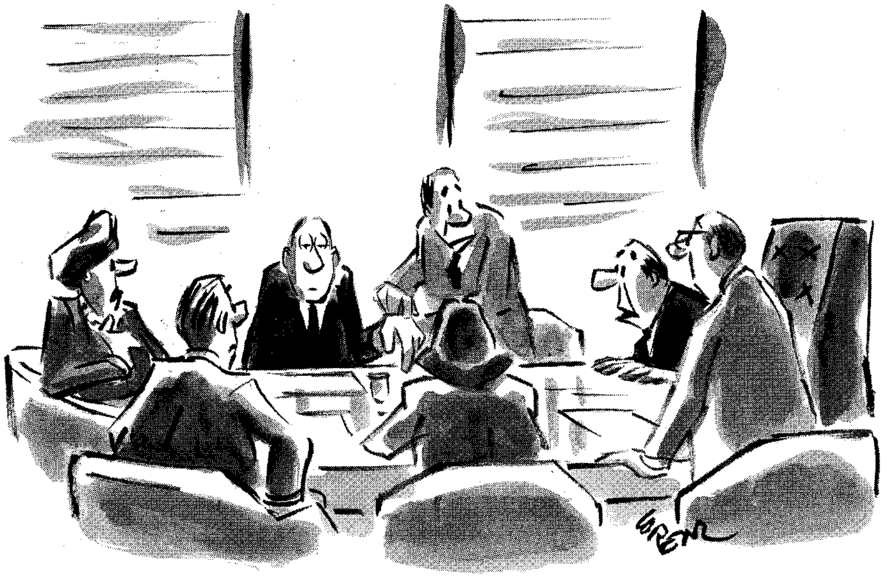
Inside the studio, Kriegman claimed that he bore no grudge toward the strikers. "I believe in free speech, though I think it could be less theatrical and less personal," he said. "Individuals aren't usually singled out during these things."

On the picket line, the strikers were joined by Budd Schulberg, the ninety-one-year-old screenwriter and author, who had driven from Westhampton to be there. Schulberg is best known for his Oscar-winning 1954 screenplay for "On the Waterfront," an indictment of corruption in the New York dockworkers' union. Schulberg, who has been a member of the guild since 1936, recalled meeting in secret during its early days and, later, walking a picket line with Dorothy Parker. "I was part of the struggle from the beginning," he said. "We had no pension, no health plan, no job security—nothing. We've made tremendous strides, but the fight never ends. Now we're getting screwed on DVDs."

Another surprise visitor was Timothy Lynch, the president of the Teamsters Local 1205. "Persons in the literary field—too often, other workers don't see them as truly being of labor," Lynch told the writers. "But I want you to know that the people who drive the trucks feel a tremendous solidarity with you courageous folks. We're all in this together." With a little encouragement, Lynch picked up the bullhorn and, in a clear tenor, sang "Which Side Are You On?" and "Joe Hill." After a silence, Schulberg, whose eyes had become moist, said, "That was the most beautiful rendition of 'Joe Hill' I've ever heard."

"Well, thank you," Lynch said. "He's here. He's here. He didn't die in vain, and you're fighting the good fight."

—*Adam Green*



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THE FINANCIAL PAGE
PUMP PRESSURE

In Mississippi, police cars escorted gasoline tankers along the roads. In Georgia, gas lines stretched for blocks. In New York, a gallon of fuel ran you $3.50 or more. Along with the devastation that Hurricane Katrina visited on the people of the Gulf Coast, it wreaked havoc on oil rigs and refineries, and for the past two weeks American consumers have been dealing with the results.

The precipitous rise of U.S. gas prices was straight from an economics textbook: with refineries out of commission, the supply of gas shrank, while demand stayed the same, and prices jumped. Americans are happy with the free market when it allows them to buy cheap T-shirts and twenty-nine-dollar DVD players, but they tend to like it less when they have to pay fifty dollars to fill up their gas tanks. So politicians, anxious lest angry consumers become angry voters, have been contemplating a variety of dubious plans to ease pressure at the pump: price caps, prosecution of alleged price gougers, and—the surefire political winner—tax cuts. Georgia has already temporarily repealed its gas taxes, and Michigan, Florida, and a host of other states are thinking about it.

Let's hope they keep thinking. While a gas tax cut looks like a panacea, it's more like a placebo. To begin with, unless cutting taxes brings Gulf Coast refineries back online, it's unlikely to have any real impact on prices. And if prices do drop, that will exacerbate the problem of supply shortages and long lines. What we need now—as even President Bush, hardly a conservationist, has said—is for people to drive less, not more. And that means paying more for gas, not less.

Americans consume about a quarter of all the oil in the world, with per-capita use of gasoline at least double that of other developed countries. But the supply chains we rely on are remarkably fragile. Most of the world's oil fields are working to capacity, so every minor hitch sends oil prices gyrating. Last week, a study conducted by the National Commission on Energy Policy identified a shortlist of possible problems—political unrest in Nigeria, terrorist attacks in Saudi Arabia—and showed that taking as little as four per cent off the global oil market could cause prices to soar to more than $161 a barrel. Meanwhile, the refineries that we count on to turn all this oil into gasoline are similarly stretched. No new ones have been built in the U.S. since 1976; even on a good day, refineries here run at about ninety-six per cent of capacity, leaving little margin for error. Calamitous as Katrina was, it shut down just ten per cent of all refining capacity, and look at the havoc that caused.

These supply problems are not ones that Americans can do much to fix. Hurricanes, floods, and political instability abroad are hard to control, and, even if oil companies overcome their reluctance to spend billions of dollars on new refineries, construction would take years. But, if we can't affect the supply of oil, we can affect the demand for it—and the best way of doing that is not to cut gas taxes but to raise them.

Gas taxes are unpopular in the U.S., although they're remarkably low compared with those in other countries—and even, adjusting for inflation, much lower than in the late nineteen-fifties. But, of all taxes, a gas tax is among the most fair and efficient. In the late nineties, a survey of forty top economists found disagreement on nearly every issue, but gas taxes had unanimous support.

The gas tax works well for a couple of reasons. First, it relies on the free market instead of trying to tinker with it. Unlike fuel-economy standards, the most common method of reducing demand for oil over the past thirty years, a gas tax doesn't tell people what kind of car to drive. It simply raises the price of gasoline and lets people adjust their behavior accordingly.

The other, more fundamental virtue of the gas tax is that it brings the price of gasoline in line with its true cost. When all is said and done, cheap gas is an illusion, because our reliance on gas creates a whole series of costs that aren't factored in to the pump price—among them congestion, pollution, and increased risk of accidents. The most rigorous study of these "externalities," by the economists Ian Parry and Kenneth Small, suggests that a tax that took them into account would come to $1.01 for every gallon of gas.

There are also hefty costs that aren't included in that number. The most notable is the cost of having the military protect world oil supplies; three weeks ago, President Bush said that we were in Iraq partly because we could not let terrorists "seize oil fields to fund their ambitions." In addition, there is a long history of stealth subsidies and tax credits for oil companies. Two months ago, Congress passed an energy bill that will provide tens of billions of dollars in subsidies to energy companies over the next few years in an attempt to stimulate production. One way or another, that is, we've been paying to keep the oil flowing. A gas tax would at least let us know what the price really is.

Of course, in political terms the gas tax's virtues—simplicity, transparency, immediacy—are vices. Politicians prefer complex systems that allow them to satisfy particular constituencies, reward supporters, and disguise the true costs of things. And, strangely enough, voters implicitly prefer indirect taxes to direct ones. So it may be that the gas tax will remain one of those economically sensible ideas that are doomed to fail. But oil crises are going to keep coming, and each new bout of turmoil will show just how expensive our free ride on gasoline has become.

—*James Surowiecki*

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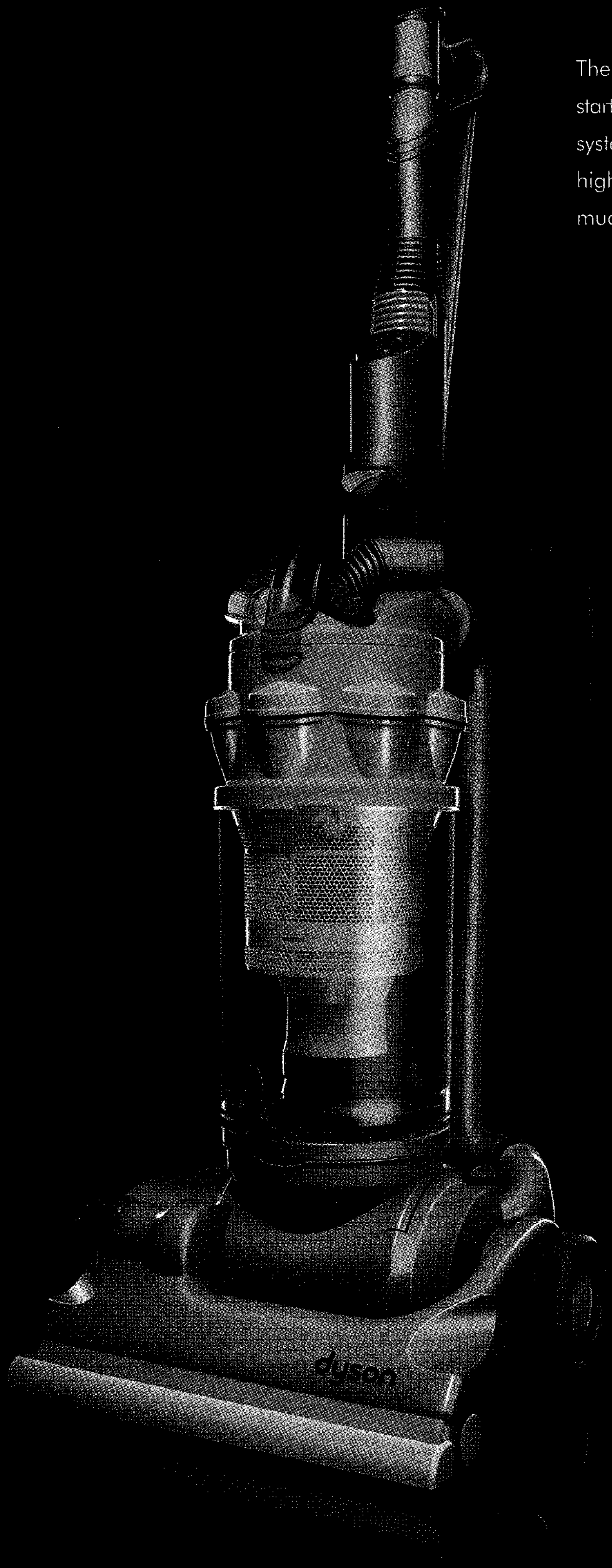

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LETTER FROM MISSISSIPPI

GONE WITH THE SURGE

An always anomalous section of the South prepares to reinvent itself.

BY PETER J. BOYER

Mississippi is among the red states, which supported President Bush in the last election, and the Mississippi coast, which is where I grew up, was the most pro-Bush region of the state. When Bush visited Biloxi, on the Friday after Hurricane Katrina, he was greeted warmly by friendly politicians, including the state's two United States senators, Trent Lott and Thad Cochran, who are Republicans; and Governor Haley Barbour, an old friend, who was the head of the Republican National Committee from 1993 to 1997. Barbour thanked Bush for coming, and, as the President picked his way along streets littered with the splinters of destroyed houses, he encountered hurricane victims who actually seemed glad to see him. One man assured Bush that he had survived Hurricane Camille, in 1969, "and we'll go through this storm." New Orleans was Bush's next stop, and he seemed almost to dread having to leave Mississippi, for all its wreckage. "You know, there's a lot of sadness, of course," he told reporters. "But there's also a spirit here in Mississippi that is uplifting."

My guess is that the President could sense in Biloxi, Gulfport, and other coastal towns something of Midland, Texas, a boom-and-bust oil town that, unlike New Orleans, was forever reinventing itself, with an eye on the next big deal and, more important, a capacity for finding opportunity in misfortune. In Midland, disaster is an oil bust; on the coast, it's a direct hit from a once-in-a-lifetime storm. Now the coast has endured two in thirty-six years.

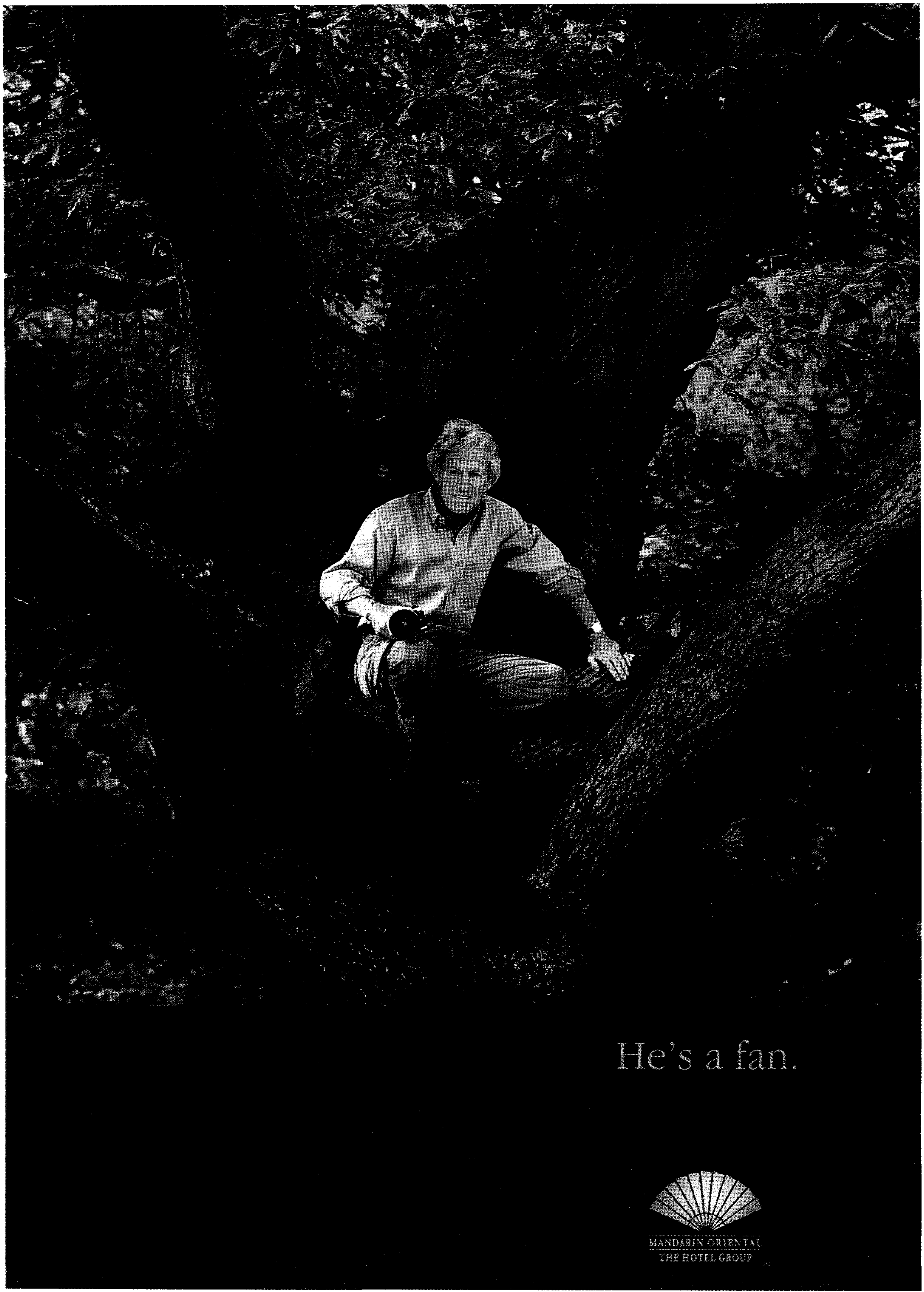
In a place where hurricanes are the local calamity, one might expect history to have a tenuous grip. On the coast of Faulkner's Mississippi, the past was a treasured, if superficial, asset—an adornment more than a way of life. The coastline was strikingly beautiful, not only for its stark white beaches but also for its fine old houses, many of them painstakingly maintained antebellum structures, situated along the twenty-five miles of beachfront between Pass Christian and Biloxi. These were summer homes, built by Delta planters and wealthy New Orleans merchants and their successors, and they lent the coastal Highway 90 an aspect of elegance, like a grand esplanade. The best known of them was Beauvoir, a building in the raised cottage style, which was the final residence of Jefferson Davis. After Davis's death, it was operated as a home for Confederate veterans, and in the nineteen-fifties it became a museum.

Wreckage of the Copa Casino, prized for liberal slot machines and a raffish ambience.

M. SPENCER GREEN/AP PHOTO

Beneath the coast's moonlight-and-magnolias veneer was a restive spirit that reflected both a heterogeneous population and the fevered ambition that occasionally seizes small-time tourist centers. By the fate of geography, the coast had its own sociology, unbound by the feudal arrangements that locked much of the rest of Mississippi into its melancholy past. The alluvial soil of the Mississippi Delta fostered an agrarian culture of fabulous wealth and aristocratic conceits, which depended upon the labor of slaves and, later, of freed blacks effectively consigned to indenture. The soil in the southern portion of the state, from the piney woods down to the coastal plain, was sandy, meagre stuff, incapable of growing much more than scrub. Nor were there vast marshes, like those which sustain the rice plantations of lowland Carolina, or cane fields, as in Louisiana. Although Mississippi has been a black-majority state through most of its history, blacks are distinctly a minority in the south, particularly along the Gulf Coast.

The people of the coast were formed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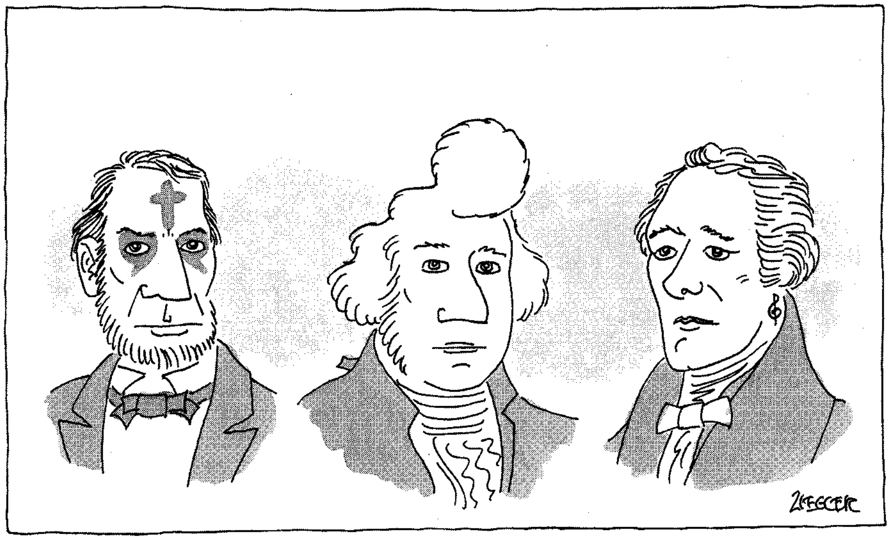
by the maritime influences of the Gulf: first, when the French made Biloxi the capital of eighteenth-century French Louisiana (before New Orleans); and, later, when the seafood industry attracted an ethnic mix that was sharply distinct from the Mississippi norm. The warm waters of the Gulf, rich in oysters, shrimp, and marketable fish—snapper, Spanish mackerel, speckled trout—supplied a seafood industry based in Biloxi that boomed in the early part of the last century, with the arrival of railroad refrigeration. Canneries and seafood factories sprang up all along Biloxi's waterfront, and the demand for labor was met by Slavonian immigrants, dislocated by the First World War, and by Cajuns, forced from Louisiana by failures of the sugarcane crop. The new workers inhabited a world that was more Steinbeck than Faulkner. They lived in shotgun houses provided by the companies that owned both the boats, which were crewed by the men, and the canneries, which were worked by the women and children. These Biloxians lived in neighborhoods like Point Cadet, the edge of land that curled into the Back Bay, and developed a culture, and even a manner of speech—a clipped sort of Cajunized Southern English—that was unique.

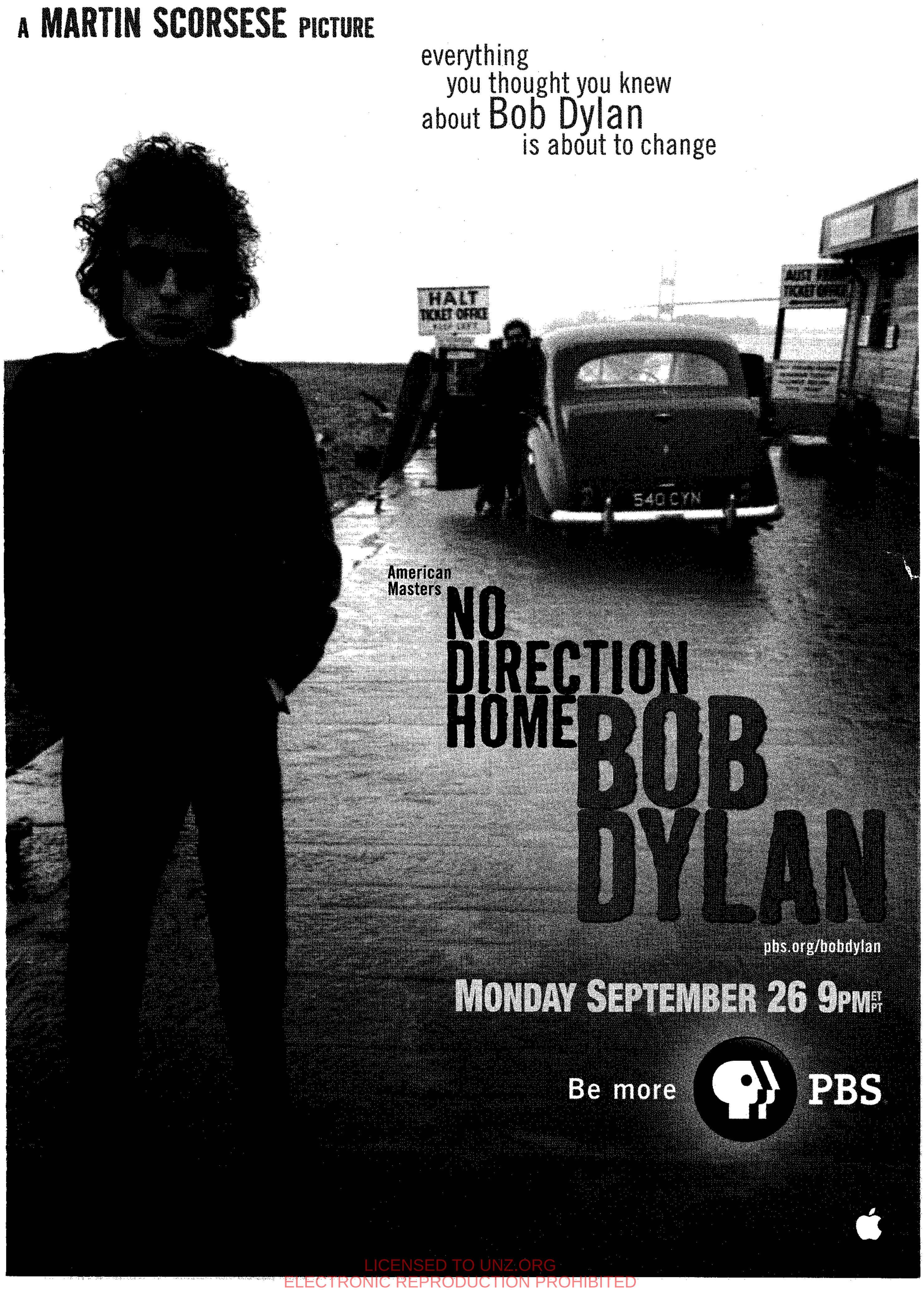
The coast's fishing industry, along with its tourism ambitions, shaped a population that was diverse, and ever open to the next big prospect. A new development boom or foolproof tourism strategy was always on the way, and in the meantime the impulses of the present were generously indulged. The Mississippi coast of my youth was constantly being "cleaned up" by crusading authorities, politicians (backed by church groups) who would raid the night clubs and underground casinos and make a show of dumping slots and pinball machines into the Back Bay. Yet eventually the gracious highway would once again bear the interested back to the Peacock Club and other vice and clip joints. Our psychic tides were pulled equally by New Orleans and the Bible Belt. We had Catholics and revellers, and a Mardi Gras celebration that was older than the one in New Orleans, but we inhabited a state that was ruled by Southern Baptist mores.

The last once-in-a-lifetime storm to strike the Mississippi coast was Hurricane Camille, which came ashore at Pass Christian the night of August 17, 1969—Woodstock weekend for the rest of America. Camille, still the strongest recorded hurricane to strike the continental United States, bore hundred-and-ninety-mile-per-hour winds and dropped swarms of tornados all along the coast and for miles inland. Camille was, for anyone who lived through it, the gauge by which all other storms are measured. I remember Camille, though, as something of an adventure, partly because I missed the worst part of it. My father and I were returning home to Gulfport from California, and didn't arrive until the day after the storm. Coming into town from the north on Highway 49, we were stopped just outside Gulfport at a military checkpoint, established to keep all but local residents out of the area. Inside the perimeter, I saw scenes of such wreckage, a sort of perfect disorder, that they remain in my mind's eye still. Freighters had been tossed over Highway 90, snakes dropped from the trees, making you flinch when you saw a downed wire, and there were even carcasses of dead cows that had apparently blown in from Cat Island, one of the barrier islands to the south. More than a hundred and forty people had been killed on the coast, and scores more inland. I was in high school then, and helped with the cleanup some, ill-advisedly taking up a chainsaw, but mostly my friends and I took advantage of the extended summer vacation (and were annoyed that water skiing in the bayou was banned). The Federal Emergency Management Administration did not yet exist, although I'm fairly certain that Senators John Stennis and James Eastland managed to direct a decent portion of the federal budget Mississippi's way. President Nixon came to town for what seemed like five minutes, and, the next thing I knew, it was New Year's Day and Ole Miss was playing Arkansas in the Sugar Bowl (Archie Manning's Rebels 27, Razorbacks 22). What I mainly remember is an overriding sense that we were a community that lived in hurricane alley, and that Camille was an extreme example of an indigenous feature.

Communities briefly halted new beachfront construction, until more rigorous codes were adopted, and then the coast leaned into reconstruction and, eventually, recovered, actually living up to the local boosters' vow to raise up a community that was "better than ever!" The annual hurricane seasons came and went, bringing some minor storms and a few frights, but, like coastal people everywhere, locals mostly chose to stay put and ride the storm out. I've long since left the coast, the last member of my family to go, although I still consider it home. I'd hoped to visit next month, to celebrate the ninetieth birthday of Jacob Guice, a retired lawyer and



LINCOLN GOES GOTH, WHILE WASHINGTON FAVORS ROCKABILLY, AND HAMILTON REMAINS MOSTLY MOZART.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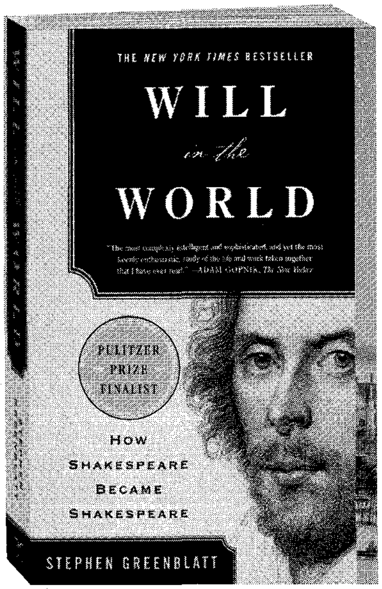
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the patriarch of one of the region's most respected families. On Sunday, August 28th, as Katrina grew (briefly) to a Category 5 hurricane, I learned that Jacob and his wife, Jo, had evacuated to Birmingham. Four days later, I left for the coast, detouring through Birmingham, where I was joined by Jacob's son Billy Guice, who currently runs the family law firm, in Biloxi. We loaded an S.U.V. with a generator and thirty-five gallons of spare gasoline, and headed south.

Billy's brother-in-law, Charles Clark, had shown us aerial photographs of the coast that he had downloaded from a government Web site. Judging from the computer images, the Guices' family home, a Mediterranean villa in Ocean Springs, on the Bay of Biloxi, appeared to have survived. The house belonging to Danny Guice, Jacob's brother and a former mayor of Biloxi, wasn't where it was supposed to be; no structure at all was visible on his property. The photographs didn't reveal the fate of Billy's law office or his new home on the water in Ocean Springs, which he had built according to the strictest specifications of the hurricane code.

As we approached the coast, thirty or forty miles above Mobile on Interstate 65, we began to see indications of the recent passage of a huge storm, just as my father and I had as we came into Gulfport in the summer of 1969: pine trees felled in clumps and bent at opposite angles, billboards stripped clean of their ads, and road signs twisted backward. Closer to Mississippi, we saw marquee ads promoting coming attractions at the casino resorts on the coast (Merle Haggard, Meat Loaf, Wayne Newton).

The casinos were built after Camille, and were made possible, in part, by a slump in one of the principal local industries, shrimping. Beginning in the late nineteen-seventies, there had been an influx of Vietnamese, mostly boat people and other refugees. The area was naturally suited to the newcomers, who found a familiar climate and familiar work—fishing. They took jobs in the seafood factories that many of the traditional Biloxians had abandoned, but when they began to run their own boats they were seen as unwelcome competition. The Vietnamese worked unheard-of hours at an astonishing pace, many living with their families on their boats, and they employed fishing methods that caused locals to worry that the shrimp beds were being overharvested. Most of the Vietnamese also received some government assistance as part of a federal resettlement program, fuelling the notion that they were being granted an unfair advantage. There were some confrontations, and a few incidents (though nothing like the violence that erupted among fishermen on the Texas coast), but by the end of the eighties the Vietnamese had become an accepted part of the community. They moved into the shotgun homes of the Point and Back Bay, and opened restaurants along Howard Avenue on the east end of town, and the shrimp industry remained central to the coast's identity. In the late eighties, however, competition from shrimp farms in Asia depressed market prices, and the local economy clearly needed a boost.

The casinos that followed were an unmistakable indication of the coast's willingness to distinguish its particular character from the state's Bible Belt mores. In the past decade and a half, gambling has transformed the area, mainly through the seemingly quixotic efforts of a man named Rick Carter, who is a client of Billy's and was a schoolmate of mine in Gulfport. After an early career in the clothing business, Carter and two partners, Terry Green and William (Si) Redd, a Nevada slot-machine tycoon, bought a small forty-year-old cruise ship and renamed it the Pride of Mississippi, in the hope of conducting "cruises to nowhere"—gambling excursions into international waters beyond the Mississippi Sound. In 1989, the men persuaded the Mississippi legislature to allow gambling on boats cruising along the shore. It had been an audacious quest, given that Mississippi's politics were (and are) so deeply influenced by religious conservatives. (Mississippi was the last state to vote to repeal Prohibition, in 1966, and some counties are still dry.) Lottery initiatives were regularly defeated. In the late eighties, though, the unemployment rate was high, and prospects for a turnaround in shrimping and the other principal industry, timber, were low.

The following year, a Natchez legislator proposed a bill that would allow gambling cruises on riverboats along the Mississippi. Then began one of the legendary episodes in Mississippi backroom politics. Sonny Meredith, a state representative who was a powerful committee chairman, concluded that, if gambling cruises would be an economic benefit to river towns, then gambling boats that operated while docked in a town—his own Delta city of Greenville, for example—would be even better. Meredith changed the language in the bill, secured its passage by obscuring the changes, and sent the legislation on to the state senate. Gambling opponents had more than enough votes to kill the bill. But State Senator Tommy Gollott, an old up-from-the-Point Biloxi pol, reportedly persuaded ten Delta senators to absent themselves from the vote (most of them claiming a sudden stomach ailment), and the measure passed. Within months, dockside gambling had found its way to the coast as well.

Rick Carter's small-boat operation went in and out of bankruptcy, was sold and bought back, and was eventually named the Copa Casino, and docked at the port of Gulfport. Meanwhile, other gaming interests, including big players from Nevada, realized that there was nothing in the state statutes limiting the size of a gambling boat, and they began to construct casinos on huge barges, docking them in semi-permanent positions and building parking structures, theatres, and hotels that were essentially part of the boat. By 2002, there were a dozen casinos on the coast, and Carter's Copa was the only boat in the conventional sense. Cramped and dimly lit, the Copa was prized by the locals for its liberal slot machines and raffish ambience, but Carter and his partners eventually yielded to market pressures and moved the Copa's operations to a behemoth barge.

The rise of the gaming industry in Mississippi has been perceived as both a benefit and a bane. The presence of a fleet of huge, neon-lit floating casinos presented an obvious, if ill-considered, complication in the event of a big storm. I remember hearing of various contingency plans (including moving the boats into the Mississippi River or taking them out into the Gulf and sinking them), but the governing policy essentially amounted to mooring them tight and hoping for the best. The casinos also made for an incongruity to the drive along Highway 90, with gracious homes on the north side of the road and the likes of mammoth faux pirate ships parked to the south. Yet the casinos have been an economic boon, paying taxes that account for close to ten per cent of the entire state budget—$335 million in 2005, and that figure does not include revenue from associated businesses, such as hotels and restaurants. Mississippi was long accustomed to last place in most economic and social indicators, but in the five years between 1992 and 1997 its service industries led the nation in revenue growth and job creation. Upward of fifty thousand jobs were created by the gambling industry, bringing a wave of immigration from Mexico and the Caribbean. Biloxi's school district, which occasionally was so financially strained that students had to share textbooks, now receives additional revenues of six million dollars a year, has a new, state-of-the-art high school and a new football stadium, and provides two sets of books for each student (one set for home, one for the classroom).

Billy and I saw a number of fishing boats as we entered Mississippi, some of them safely moored in back waterways, some wrecked and beached. On the Interstate 10 bridge over the Pascagoula River, the eastbound lanes were closed, because a barge had slipped its moorings and slammed into the concrete-and-steel pilings supporting the bridge. Ocean Springs was a few miles ahead. On the trip down, I'd asked Billy whether his view of life on the coast had been shaped by surviving Camille. Billy was twenty-two, about to begin his first year at Tulane Law School, when Camille hit. His grandfather W. L. Guice, a lawyer active in Democratic politics who was a friend of F.D.R.'s and seconded his nomination in 1932, had lived in a beachfront home that was swept away by the storm. The old man, a widower, survived, and moved in with one of his children, but his family felt that after Camille he gave

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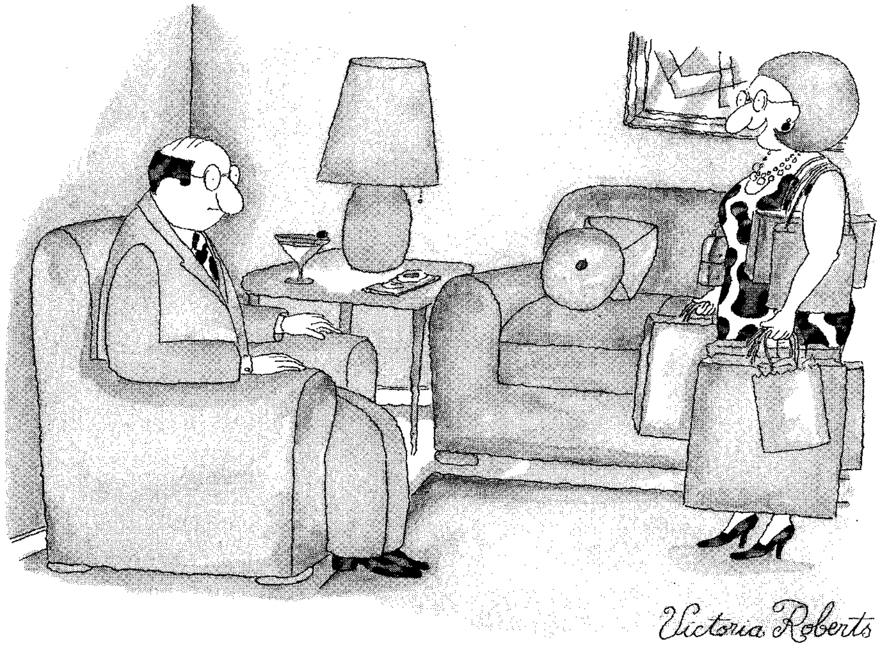

"Nothing ventured, nothing exchanged."

• •

up. "He didn't ever start to rebuild," Billy recalled. "He sort of took to his bed, and started the dying process. It just took him three years to get there.

"For me, I think, personally, if you lived through Camille you realize it's just all stuff, you know?" he said. "So all I've got this time is a little more stuff."

The family's first concern, expressed in hushed conversations in Birmingham, was for Jacob and Jo's old stucco house on the bay. The worry was that losing his home might hasten the end for Jake, as it had for his father. For all of us, that house was a kind of symbol for the comeback after Camille. When the Guices bought the place, after the storm, it was in an advanced state of disrepair. But the house was solidly built, and behind it was a long, rickety pier that stretched out into the bay. Each evening after leaving the office, Jake, without bothering to loosen his tie, would head straight to the pier with his fishing gear. He had joined the Marines after graduating from Yale Law, in 1939, and had come back from the war with only one eye. He didn't like to acknowledge it, but his balance was sometimes unsteady, and Jo worried that one day he would walk right off the pier into the bay.

Now the pier was gone, along with the boathouse where Jake kept his gear. Miraculously, the house was relatively unscathed. A few of the heavy Spanish tiles were missing from the roof, some trees were down, and the live oaks were brown, as if they'd been scorched.

In the neighborhood where Billy lived, though, nearly every home was either completely destroyed or so badly damaged that it might as well have been destroyed. As we crept along the cluttered road toward the point of land where he'd built his house, the trees were filled with the detritus of the storm, plastic bags and fragments of clothing, even a chair. The pines, each bearing a broad gash about twenty-five feet above the ground, described the course of the storm surge as it pushed through, slashing the trees with debris. It was apparent that most of the damage had been caused by water. Survivors who had stayed or made their way back had painted messages on the big plywood sheets they'd nailed over their windows before the storm. The messages gave street addresses and insurance-policy numbers—"We R OK. 6612 Riviera. State Farm Insurance"—and many described missing dogs.

Billy's house was gone. All that remained was the foundation, portions of the frame, and a swimming pool. As we picked our way through the rubble, Billy conducted a tour of the place, in a tone approaching dispassion: "This was the garage. Over there was a guest house." After such a storm, few objects retain their familiar form, and the eye reflexively darts to those that somehow appear as they should. We found a bottle of Chardonnay standing upright, still intact, just a couple of feet from a huge chunk of granite countertop that had been lifted and tossed from some distance away. "All this was glass," Billy said, gesturing to what had been his living-room windows, which, overlooking the bay, had afforded an unobstructed view of the casinos on the far shore. "There were decks around there, and it was all glass. And everything had that same view, and at night you had this rainbow of colors."

Billy's truck was smashed, and his small sailboat was nowhere to be seen. Before we left, he pointed out one of the precautions he'd taken against a storm: the hurricane straps still attached to the frame of his former guest house. The straps survived; the roof they were supposed to hold down was spread somewhere over Jackson County.

Our next stop was Biloxi, where the roads were covered with sand and a trooper with his search dog walked amid the rubble of what appeared to have been a motel. Some streets were blocked by debris, making long, crooked work of what had been a straightforward drive to Billy's law office downtown, in a building on Water Street—so named, Billy said, after an inundation from a storm in the middle of the last century. As I drove, looking for the street, Billy suddenly said, "Stop here."

"Aren't we going to try to find the office?" I asked. The area was torn up, and I had no idea where we were.

"There it is," he said. We were at the building's entrance, facing away from the Gulf, and there had been so much damage that we couldn't enter. We walked around to the Gulf side, and saw there would be no problem entering—the building's entire rear wall was gone. The place, like all of what had been downtown Biloxi, had the sickly-sweet smell of waterlogged rot and death. But Billy seemed pleased. "Structurally, it

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looks O.K.," he said. An air-conditioning unit the size of a meat truck had fallen from the roof of a sixteen-story building next door. A small parking garage had been swept away, leaving a hole with several smashed cars in it. Billy ventured into his office building and returned with a Presidential portrait inscribed to his grandfather by F.D.R.

We tried to make our way west on Highway 90 toward Gulfport, but we hadn't got very far when the highway became so buckled and broken that we were obliged to turn back. Traffic—mostly locals trying to get home—was being directed by a team of officers from the state fish-and-game authority, who had been called in from counties up north. When I showed one of the officers my press pass, he offered, unbidden, the fact that "we have no body count." Any number of dead seemed credible, as we made our way along the coast, past whole communities, such as Point Cadet, in Biloxi, that were simply no longer there, but we saw no corpses.

Even if, as initially seemed likely, New Orleans had been spared by this storm, Katrina would probably have ranked as this country's most destructive storm ever. In the days and weeks after Camille, it was at least possible to imagine the coast eventually recovering its essential character. Although most of the historic houses along the strand were damaged by Camille, they stood; neighborhoods were recognizable. It is not so easy to imagine a return to normal now. Beauvoir is gutted. The Tullis House, an 1856 brick Greek Revival structure in Biloxi, was destroyed, as were the Gillis House, the Brielmaier House, and many more. I doubt if any high-school kids today are enjoying the disruption.

When we reached Gulfport, I spotted the First Baptist Church, which had been completed the year before Camille and had weathered it whole; now it was a wreck, run through by the surge. The old Hancock Bank Building, where my father, on his first day in town, walked in and cashed a check for a hundred dollars without any local identification, was still standing, but the last house we lived in, near downtown, was gone. The state port in Gulfport, where some of us used to get day work in the summer unloading banana boats, was demolished, the Dole container units crumpled together in a corner. One of the buildings that remained was, aptly enough, the Riemann Funeral Home; the front doors were open and there was much activity. Two refrigerated tractor-trailer units were parked out front.

Turning to leave downtown as the 6 P.M. curfew approached, we saw a casino barge sprawled across the road, like a pink beached whale. It was Rick Carter's Copa Casino.

As we drove on, Billy was already imagining the new coast. The destruction of the port, he said, was not necessarily a bad thing. "It could be a benefit. That could be one of the things they can argue: Give us another billion dollars, and give us a real port now to help us come back. Let us dock a cruise ship here, and give the casinos a reason to stay."

There is every indication that the casinos, having established the Mississippi coast as a gambling and entertainment destination—the hard part—mean to stay. Owners have announced that they will keep paying their employees, and some have invited them back to work—on cleanup, for now. The leverage is with the casino industry—a fact to which the state's political structure awakened when a major revenue stream suddenly stopped. Governor Barbour may soon call a special legislative session to consider allowing the industry to build fixed structures on land. Gary Loveman, the president of Harrah's Entertainment, which owns two casinos on the coast, says the old insistence on waterway gambling was a political device that has lost its charm. "When people look back at this period and read that we decided casinos should sit in boxes that float on rivers and sit in water," he told the local *Sun Herald*, "they'll scratch their head and say, 'What good did that do?'"

In the back neighborhoods away from the water and the downtowns, the buzz of chainsaws had been going all day, as people cleared their properties and streets. We passed a Vietnamese family that had nearly managed to clean up their yard; the mother, kneeling, sorted through fragments of household effects. Behind her, the house, missing its front and most of its roof, was barely standing. Billy's brother Jakie was planning to build a vast trailer park to handle the anticipated influx of construction workers needing short-term housing. Billy had spent much of the day on his cell phone, contacting his employees and organizing a temporary office in Ocean Springs.

"The Gulf Coast will be coming back," Billy said. "But nothing will be the same. The storm changed the economics of property investment. My property, I think, has some value as a potential site. Now, I think you get three or four properties, and you've got a helluva project."

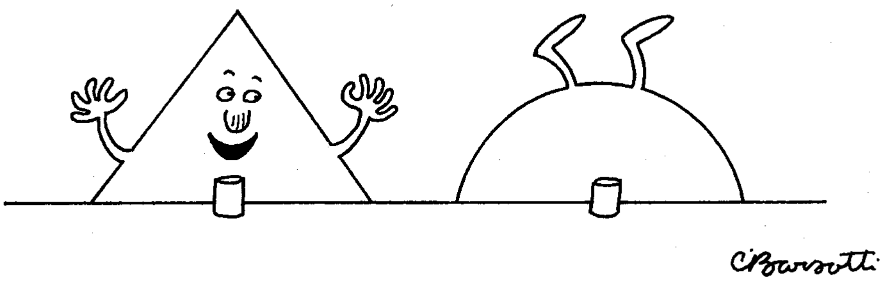
He was willing to turn that beautiful spot on the water into a condo site?

"I think the coast is capable of becoming interesting economically," he said. "But it'll never come back into something that we knew. That's gone."

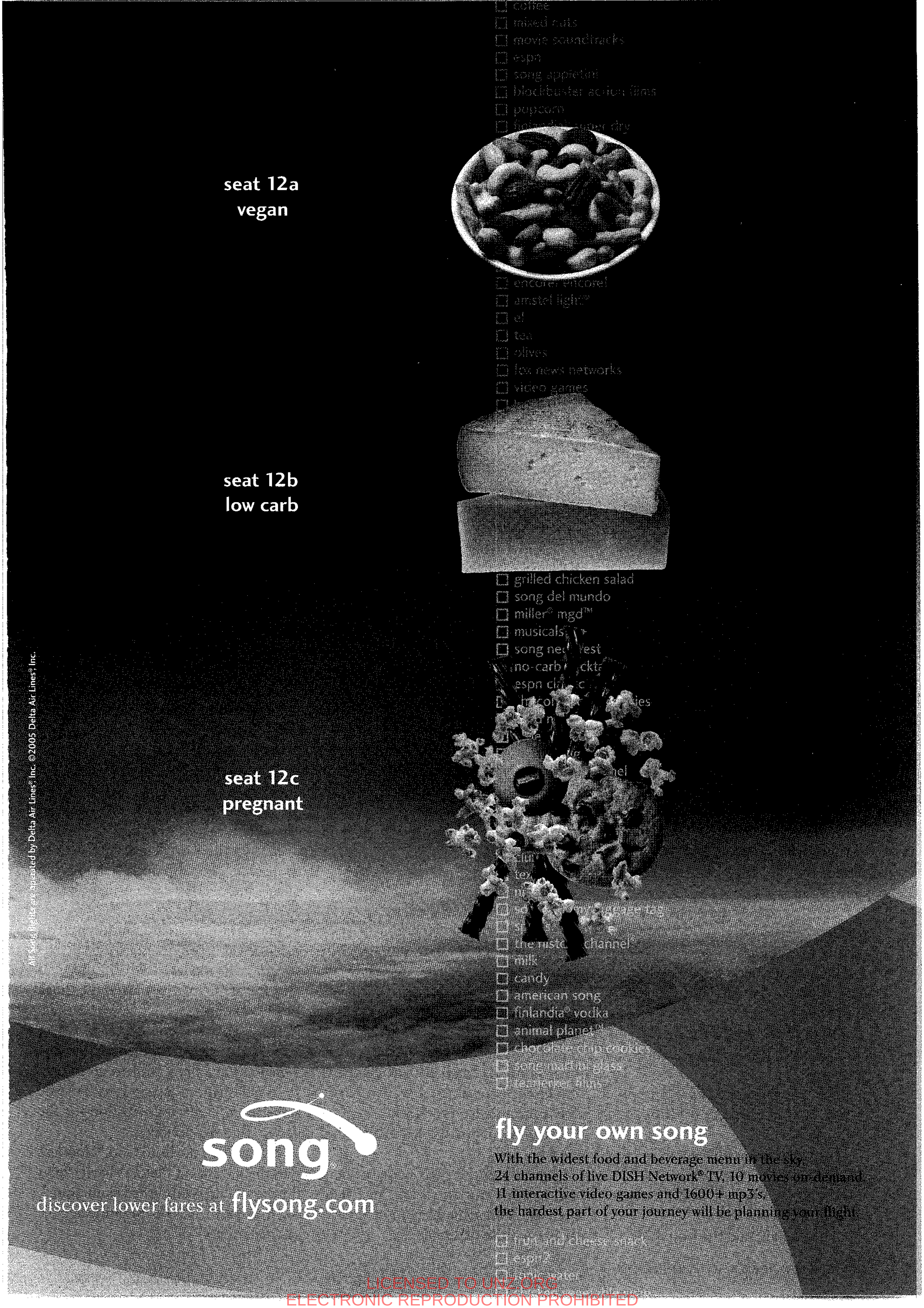
I asked if the local communities could zone the beachfront in a way that would salvage some portion of the area's history.

"Why zone the historical district if there's no history left?"

Billy Guice was beginning to see all kinds of opportunities. "You do a high-rise condominium," he said. "This storm just means you don't have to clear off the site." ♦



"I win. I win."



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SHOUTS & MURMURS

INTELLIGENT DESIGN

BY PAUL RUDNICK

Day No. 1:

And the Lord God said, "Let there be light," and lo, there was light. But then the Lord God said, "Wait, what if I make it a sort of rosy, sunset-at-the-beach, filtered half-light, so that everything else I design will look younger?"

"I'm loving that," said Buddha. "It's new."

"You should design a restaurant," added Allah.

Day No. 2:

"Today," the Lord God said, "let's do land." And lo, there was land.

"Well, it's really not just land," noted Vishnu. "You've got mountains and valleys and—is that lava?"

"It's not a single statement," said the Lord God. "I want it to say, 'Yes, this is land, but it's not afraid to ooze.'"

"It's really a backdrop, a sort of blank canvas," put in Apollo. "It's, like, minimalism, only with scale."

"But—brown?" Buddha asked.

"Brown with infinite variations," said the Lord God. "Taupe, ochre, burnt umber—they're called earth tones."

"I wasn't criticizing," said Buddha. "I was just noticing."

Day No. 3:

"Just to make everyone happy," said the Lord God, "today I'm thinking oceans, for contrast."

"It's wet, it's deep, yet it's frothy; it's design without dogma," said Buddha, approvingly.

"Now, *there's* movement," agreed Allah. "It's not just 'Hi, I'm a planet—no splashing.'"

"But are those ice caps?" inquired Thor. "Is this a coherent vision, or a highball?"

"I can do ice caps if I want to," sniffed the Lord God.

"It's about a mood," said the Angel Moroni, supportively.

"Thank you," said the Lord God.

Day No. 4:

"One word," said the Lord God. "Landscaping. But I want it to look natural, as if it all somehow just happened."

"Do rain forests," suggested a primitive tribal god, who was known only as a clicking noise.

"Rain forests here," decreed the Lord God. "And deserts there. For a spa feeling."

"Which is fresh, but let's give it glow," said Buddha. "Polished stones and bamboo, with a soothing trickle of something."

"I know where you're going," said the Lord God. "But why am I seeing scented candles and a signature body wash?"

"Shut up," said Buddha.

"You shut up," said the Lord God.

"It's all about the mix," Allah declared in a calming voice. "Now let's look at some swatches."

Day No. 5:

"I'd like to design some creatures of the sea," the Lord God said. "Sleek but not slick."

"Yes, yes, and more yes—it's a total gills moment," said Apollo. "But what if you added wings?"

"Fussy," whispered Buddha to Zeus. "Why not epaulets and a sash?"

"Legs," said Allah. "Now let's do legs."

"Are we already doing dining-room tables?" asked the Lord God, confused.

"No, design some *creatures* with legs," said Allah. So the Lord God, nodding, designed an ostrich.

"First draft," everyone agreed, and so the Lord God designed an alligator.

"There's gonna be a waiting list," Zeus murmured appreciatively.

"Now do puppies!" pleaded Vishnu. "And kitties!"

"*Ooooo!*" all the gods cooed. Then, feeling a bit embarrassed, Zeus ventured, "Design something more practical, like a horse or a mule."

"What about a koala?" asked the Lord God.

"Much better," Zeus declared, cuddling the furry little animal. "I'm going to call him Buttons."

Day No. 6:

"Today I'm really going out there," said the Lord God. "And I know it won't be popular at first, and you're all gonna be saying, 'Earth to Lord God,' but in a few million years it's going to be timeless. I'm going to design a man."

And everyone looked upon the man that the Lord God designed.

"It has your eyes," Zeus told the Lord God.

"Does it stack?" inquired Allah.

"It has a naïve, folk-artsy, I-made-it-myself vibe," said Buddha. The Inca sun god, however, only scoffed. "Been there. Evolution," he said. "It's called a shaved monkey."

"I like it," protested Buddha. "But it can't work a strapless dress." Everyone agreed on this point, so the Lord God announced, "Well, what if I give it nice round breasts and lose the penis?"

"Yes," the gods said immediately.

"Now it's intelligent," said Aphrodite.

"But what if I made it blond?" giggled the Lord God.

"And what if I made you a booming offscreen voice in a lot of bad movies?" asked Aphrodite.

Day No. 7:

"You know, I'm really feeling good about this whole intelligent-design deal," said the Lord God. "But do you think that I could redo it, keeping the quality but making it at a price point we could all live with?"

"I'm not sure," said Buddha. "You mean, what if you designed a really basic, no-frills planet? Like, do the man and the woman really need all those toes?"

"Hello!" said the Lord God. "Clean lines, no moving parts, functional but fun. Three bright, happy, wash 'n' go colors."

"Swedish meets Japanese, with maybe a Platinum Collector's Edition for the geeks," Buddha decided.

"Done," said the Lord God. "Now let's start thinking about Pluto. What if everything on Pluto was brushed aluminum?"

"You mean, let's do Neptune again?" said Buddha. ♦

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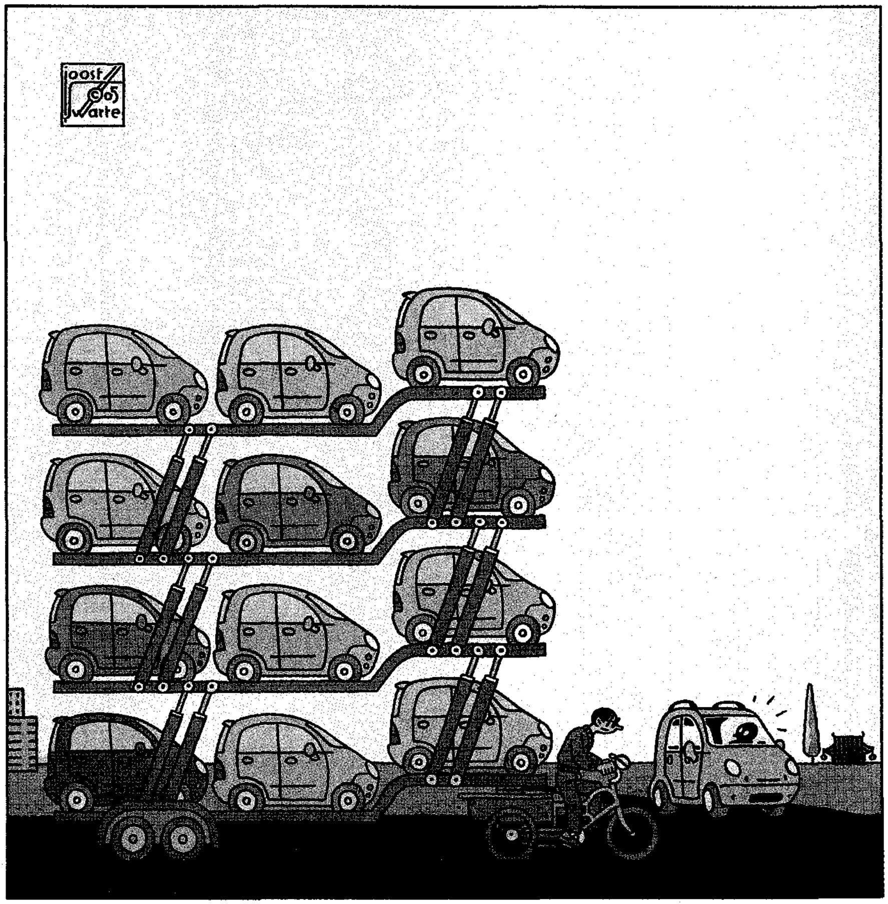
LETTER FROM CHINA

CAR TOWN

An upstart automaker targets the American market.

BY PETER HESSLER

On the way to Wuhu, I drove through Confucius' home town. I also passed the Stone Warriors of Nanpi, the Iron Lion of Shijia, and the Alfalfa Land of Jinniu. The village of Jinxiang had posted a big sign, in English, above the highway: "The Best Garlic Is from Jinxiang in All of China." Wuhu is a new car town. A local company had recently declared its intention to become the first Chinese automaker to export to the United States, and the American partners were scheduled to arrive on Sunday. On Friday, I had rented a Chinese-made Volkswagen Jetta and headed south to meet them. Two days, eight hundred miles: a road trip from Beijing to Wuhu.



Chery's strategy has been to produce cars that appear identical to established brands.

The highways were excellent—four lanes, groomed medians. Some sections were so new that they still appeared on the map as broken lines. The Chinese expressway network has doubled in length in the past four years, and in January the ministry of communications held a press conference to announce plans to add another thirty thousand miles. When asked about the purpose of the new roads, Zhang Chunxian, the minister of communications, mentioned Condoleezza Rice's visit to the People's Republic in July, 2004. According to Zhang, Rice told a Chinese official that she had fond memories from her childhood of vacations spent travelling in the family car. "She said those trips helped her love the United States," Zhang explained. "By building expressways, we can boost the auto industry, but that's only a small part of it."

I drove past miles of shiny new billboards; they were as blank as unplugged televisions, waiting for advertisers to figure out what kind of consumers might someday pass this way. In recent years, increasing numbers of urban Chinese have purchased automobiles, but it's still rare for them to take long trips, because tolls are high and drivers are inexperienced. The highway traffic consisted mostly of trucks, heavily loaded and braking hard on the downhills. South of Tianjin, traffic slowed and swerved; hundreds of pamphlets flapped above the road like dying birds. I pulled over and caught one. Apparently, a truck full of imported recycling materials had come unlatched. The pamphlet was a fourteen-page mortgage application for Woolwich, a financial-services company in Dartford, Kent, and it was as blank as the billboards.

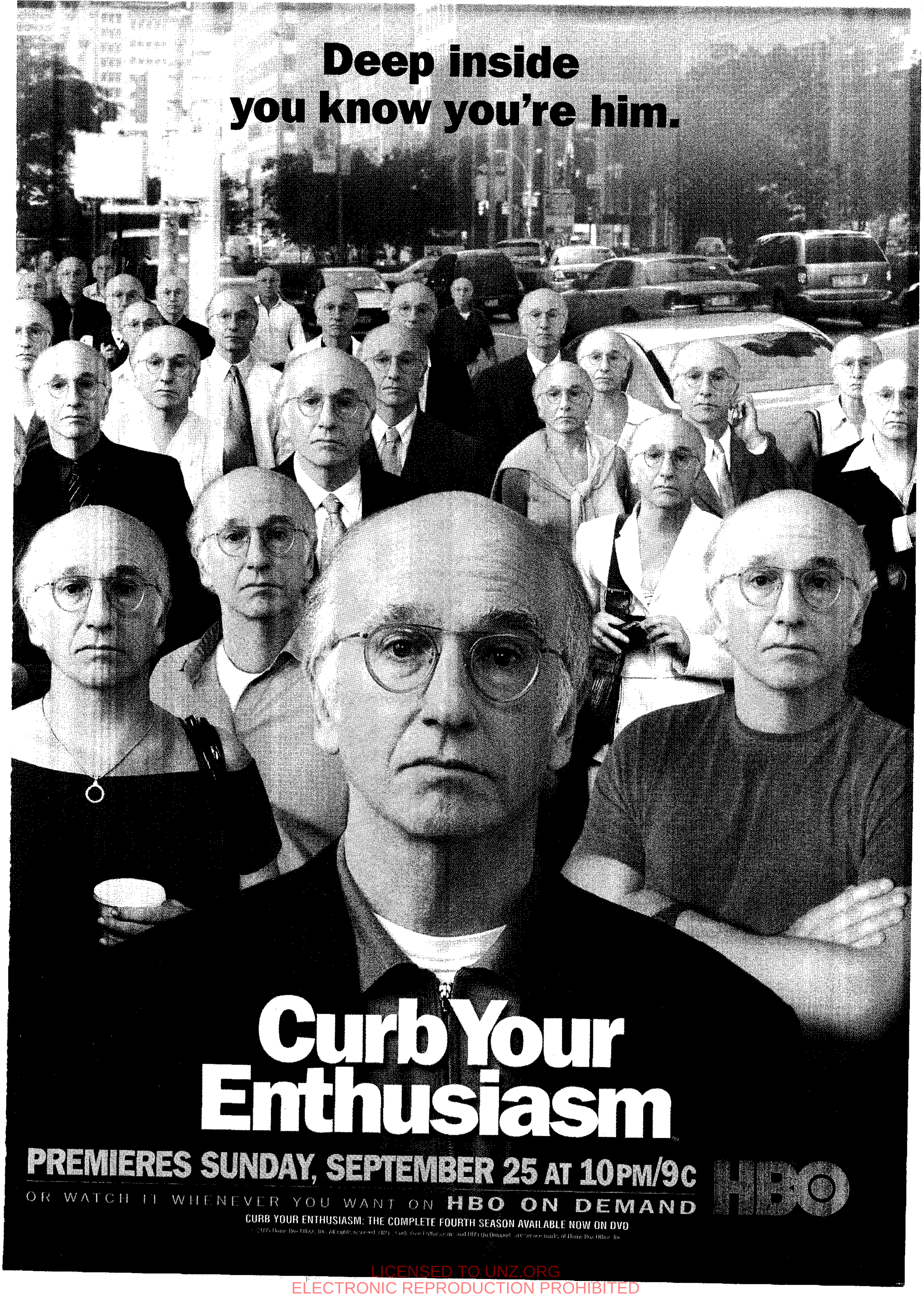
I stopped again at the Confucius family cemetery. The city of Qufu had turned it into a tourist attraction, with signs posted at the highway exits, but my car was the only one in the lot. The cemetery, which sprawled through a big forest, was quiet. For more than twenty centuries, local men with the Confucius family name—Kong—had been buried here, along with their wives. A hundred thousand people were laid to rest among the cypress trees.

One tombstone dated to the late Ming dynasty and the sixty-second Kong generation. I took a few steps to the next memorial and skipped four hundred years: 2001, seventy-fourth generation. I was on my way to another tablet when I heard the sound of wailing. I followed it, picking my way around the tombs.

A group of women cried and kowtowed before a mound of fresh earth. They had arrived on a Taishan 200 tractor, which had three wheels and a two-stroke engine. The tomb offerings were simple: oranges, apples, a boiled chicken.

The men stood nearby, watching, and one of them offered me a cigarette. He told me that they were burying a woman who had been married to a member of the seventy-second generation of Kongs. The wailing continued for ten more minutes, and then stopped abruptly. Two women came over to talk; they asked me what American funerals were like, and if it was true that people in my country

JOOST SWARTE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could have as many children as they wanted. I told them that I was of the fifth generation of Hesslers in America. A man crank-started the tractor, and they putted off into the mist. They had left the chicken but packed up the oranges.

Nearby, the stone memorial above Confucius' tomb was still cracked from the vandalism of the Cultural Revolution. A tour guide told me that Red Guards had excavated the grave and found it empty.

In Wuhu, Malcolm Bricklin, the leader of the American contingent, told me, "We're making history, and I'm going to film it." Bricklin, who is sixty-six years old, has spent most of his life chasing breakthroughs in the automotive industry. In the late sixties, he introduced Subaru to American consumers. In the early seventies, he founded an automobile manufacturer in New Brunswick, Canada. He commissioned the design of a futuristic sports car with gull-wing doors, named it after himself, and promptly went bankrupt. In the eighties, he brought the Yugo across the Atlantic. He declared personal bankruptcy in the early nineties. In 2002, with a team of private investors and technical advisers, he began searching for another foreign auto company that was capable of exporting to the United States. He visited England, Serbia, Romania, Poland, and India. He stopped looking once he got to Wuhu.

By Chinese standards, Wuhu is a small city (population, seven hundred thousand), but a local company called Chery had become, as of 2004, the ninth-biggest auto manufacturer in the country. In December of that year, Chery signed a distribution agreement with Visionary Vehicles, a limited-liability company that Bricklin had registered in Delaware. Visionary Vehicles promised to arrange a dealer network in the United States, and also planned to contribute two hundred million dollars toward the design and development of five new Chery models destined for the American market. They hope to begin by importing a quarter of a million vehicles in 2007. The partnership is based on each side doing what it does best: the Chinese will manufacture, and the Americans will sell.

I had arrived in Wuhu for Visionary Vehicles' first trip back since the signing of the deal. There were twenty Americans: executives, market specialists, technical consultants. Every morning, the team ate breakfast in the executive lounge of the Guoxin Hotel; sometimes, if Malcolm Bricklin was holding forth, the meal was videotaped by his son Jonathan. Malcolm Bricklin is a tall, restless man with striking gray-blue eyes, and his voice is deep and smooth. Often, he ate breakfast with Tony Ciminera, Visionary Vehicles' executive vice-president, and Ronald E. Warnicke, its lawyer. Warnicke is an old friend of Bricklin; one of his specialties is bankruptcy law. In his garage, back in Arizona, he still has a Bricklin SV-1, with gull-wing doors.

"People talk about the Yugo like it was some kind of big failure," Bricklin said one morning. "Tony's job back then was to find the least expensive car in the world. That was when Yugoslavia was a Communist country—but a Communist country that was friendly to the West. We found a fifteen-year-old car that had never had to meet any regulations. It was basically a Fiat 128."

Tony Ciminera said, "We had to bring our own cases of toilet paper, our own fax toner. We had to bring unleaded gas for the cars."

Bricklin said, "Henry Kissinger was our consultant. Tony made five hundred and twenty-eight changes in the car in fourteen months, and in fourteen months the car was in dealers' hands."

The Guoxin Hotel, like everything else in this part of Wuhu, was brand-new. The bookcase of the executive lounge had been filled with books the way you would stock a freshly dug pond with fish. There were twelve copies of "Harvard Marketing Management," in Chinese, and ten copies of the "M.B.A. Harvard Business School Management Encyclopedia."

Bricklin emphasized that Chery didn't plan to export cut-rate cars to America. The company aimed at the mid-level market, believing that cheaper manufacturing and lower distribution costs would allow it to beat competitors' prices by thirty per cent. "I see the similarities with Japan," Bricklin said, referring to his experience with Subaru. "In 1968, it was the turning point—where people's perceptions of Japanese products shifted from cheap to good quality." He continued, "What the Japanese took twenty years to do, the Chinese can do in five."

In the old days, the Chinese élite had no interest in business. Following traditional Confucian values, they scorned the merchant class, and emperors rebuffed Western attempts at trade. But the British were determined to buy tea and sell opium, and they were willing to fight to do so. In 1842, after the first Opium War, the Chinese were forced to sign the Treaty of Nanking, which opened five cities to British trade. In 1858, after more fighting, the Chinese agreed to designate ten more ports for foreigners. Four more were opened in 1876; one of them was Wuhu.

The city sits on the east bank of the Yangtze, in the landlocked province of Anhui. In the late eighteen-seventies, the British built a pillared consulate on a hill

LOVE IN THE TIME OF WAR

When our hands caress bullets & grenades,
or linger on the turrets & luminous wings
of reconnaissance planes, we leave glimpses
of ourselves on the polished hardness.
We surrender skin, hair, sweat & fingerprints.
The assembly lines hum to our touch,
& the grinding wheels record our laments
& laughter into the bright metal.

I touch your face, your breasts, the flower
holding a world in focus. We give ourselves
to each other, letting the workday slide
away. Afterwards, lying there facing the sky,
I touch the crescent-shaped war wound. Yes,
the oldest prayer is still in my fingertips.

—*Yusef Komunyakaa*

above the town, and beside the river they set up a customs house, where opium was processed. French Jesuits constructed a church; the Spaniards ran a Catholic school. American Protestant missionaries built a hospital. And then the twentieth century brought a new series of events—the fall of the Qing dynasty, the Japanese invasion, the Communist revolution—and the foreigners disappeared from Wuhu. During the decades of the Communist planned economy, the government invested little in the region.

After 1978, when China entered the period known as Reform and Opening, one of Deng Xiaoping's key strategies involved export-processing zones—designated areas that encouraged foreign investment through special tax rates. Among these were cities that happened to be former treaty ports, and, as in the old days, they appeared in waves. In 1992 and 1993, after the earliest zones had thrived for more than a decade, the central government approved thirty-two more. One of them was Wuhu.

The city was a latecomer to the new economy, and it was relatively remote. But local officials believed that this could actually be an advantage in a heavily regulated industry like car manufacturing. Since the eighties, foreign automakers had been allowed to form joint ventures with state-owned Chinese partners, with foreign ownership limited to fifty per cent. The government's goal was to build an industry quickly, learning from the foreigners while maintaining control. (In China, nobody forgot the humiliation of the treaty ports.) Companies like Volkswagen and General Motors joined with Chinese partners, manufacturing foreign-brand cars while farming out parts production to cheap China-based suppliers. For a time, the strategy was extremely profitable for everybody, in part because the strict controls limited competition.

In Wuhu, though, the officials quietly skirted the regulations. They recruited Yin Tongyao, an Anhui native and a trained engineer, who had been a rising star in one of the joint ventures with Volkswagen. Yin had helped move some of the tooling and equipment of a failed VW plant from Westmoreland, Pennsylvania, to Changchun, Jilin. In Westmoreland, the factory had produced Golfs and Jettas. In Changchun, they used the same platform—a car's basic frame and major components—to build a Chinese version of the Jetta, which eventually became the best-selling car in the country. (The current American Jetta uses a more advanced platform.)

Yin left Volkswagen to become the vice-president of Wuhu's new company. With funding from the local government, he bought manufacturing equipment from an outdated Ford engine factory in England and moved it to Wuhu. He also acquired manufacturing blueprints for a model called the Toledo from a struggling Volkswagen subsidiary, SEAT, in Spain. The Spanish car used the same platform as the Jetta.

In secret, Yin built an automobile assembly line in Wuhu. National regulations forbade new auto manufacturers from entering the market, so the officials in Wuhu

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DOESN'T KILL
STYLISH
PEOPLE
if they use a condom.
-Kenneth Cole
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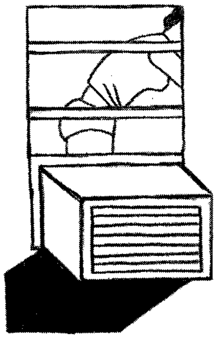
named the enterprise an "automotive components" company. The factory made its first engine in May of 1999. Seven months later, it turned out a car. It used Jetta parts, from suppliers who were supposedly exclusive to Volkswagen. VW was furious, and so was the central government.

But, during the Reform era, as authority has become decentralized, this is a common strategy: push the boundaries first, then ask forgiveness. For more than a year, Wuhu's officials negotiated with the central government, finally receiving permission to sell their cars nationwide in 2001. (Reportedly, Volkswagen accepted a financial settlement and decided not to sue.) They named their company Qirui, which has connotations of good fortune. It's pronounced a little like "cheery," but the official English name was spelled without the second "e," to indicate that Chery would always be one step removed from the complacency that comes from happiness. By 2004, Chery was selling almost ninety thousand vehicles a year.



When I met with Chu Changjun, the Party deputy secretary of the Wuhu Economic and Technological Development Area, I asked why Chery hadn't followed the proper channels for establishing a car company.

"It's like having a child," he explained. "First you have a child, then you register him. We did it the same way: first we made the cars, and then we registered to make cars."

Chu was joined by He Xuedong, the deputy director, who added, "If you apply in the traditional manner, you'll end up waiting for years. During that time, the opportunity may very well pass you by."

We were in the development area's new Investment Services Center, whose marbled lobby was big enough for two badminton nets to be stretched side by side. Some cadres had a pretty good game going when I visited during a lunch break. Chu and He gave me a stack of promotional materials in English, which included the mottoes "An Oasis for Investors" and "Investors Are Our God." One sentence read, "In Wuhu, we have high quality human resource with low cost." The next sentence discussed electricity, water supply, and sewers.

The development area was north of town, on the banks of the Yangtze. With Chery as a sort of anchor tenant, Wuhu had already attracted more than a hundred manufacturers, and new plants were going up all the time. Many of the factories had been moved from the southern coast, where costs and wages have increased during two decades of strong economic growth.

One afternoon, I visited Baoshun Road, in Wuhu's second factory district, which was lined with plants in various stages of construction. Empire Hill planned to start production the following month (air-conditioner electrical parts); Shuncheng Electronics was about to add another hundred workers (air-conditioner wiring). Century made four thousand plastic air-conditioner covers a day. At the Wuhu Shijie Hardware Company, when I asked about their products, the gatekeeper opened a desk drawer, grabbed a handful of shiny new nails, and tossed them down like dice. A pretty young woman appeared, with a business card that read "Merry Yeh—International Trade Dept. Manager." She served me tea in an upstairs office, where a plaque commemorated the company's coöperation with National Nail Corporation ("More Than Just Nails"), in the United States. Wuhu Shijie produced sixty tons of nails a day. Three hundred and forty workers. Eighteen thousand square metres. Any other questions?

"Where did you get your English name?"

"I named it after Merry Christmas!"

Downtown, the old British Consulate had been converted into the local Communist Party headquarters, and the Spanish missionary school had been turned into a technical college. For years, the former customs house had served as a kindergarten, but now it was abandoned. You could still read the faded Cultural Revolution slogans that had been painted vertically onto the hated symbol of British opium diplomacy. Small-time traders had erected wooden structures around the base, cutting off the slogans:

> Chairman Mao's Writings Are—
> In the Midst of Struggle One Learns—

Every day, the Visionary Vehicles team visited the Chery facilities. Technical advisers toured the assembly lines, and they sometimes drove prototypes on

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a small test track. All the Americans were male, and all of them spoke Detroit:

"I'd give it a six."

"Pay attention to the clutch engagement."

"Do you remember the Versailles?"

"Of course."

"What an embarrassing car."

"The only nine I've ever given was the idle on a Lincoln Marquis."

"Are you gonna do a J-turn? 'Cause if you do, warn me."

One of the Americans was named John Dinkel, and his specialty was road testing. He found the Chery test track too small. "You find out how good a car is when you do bad things," he told me. On a foggy afternoon, he drove a Chery T-11 prototype out into the half-constructed sprawl of the development zone. Three young Chinese test engineers sat in the back. None of them wore seat belts.

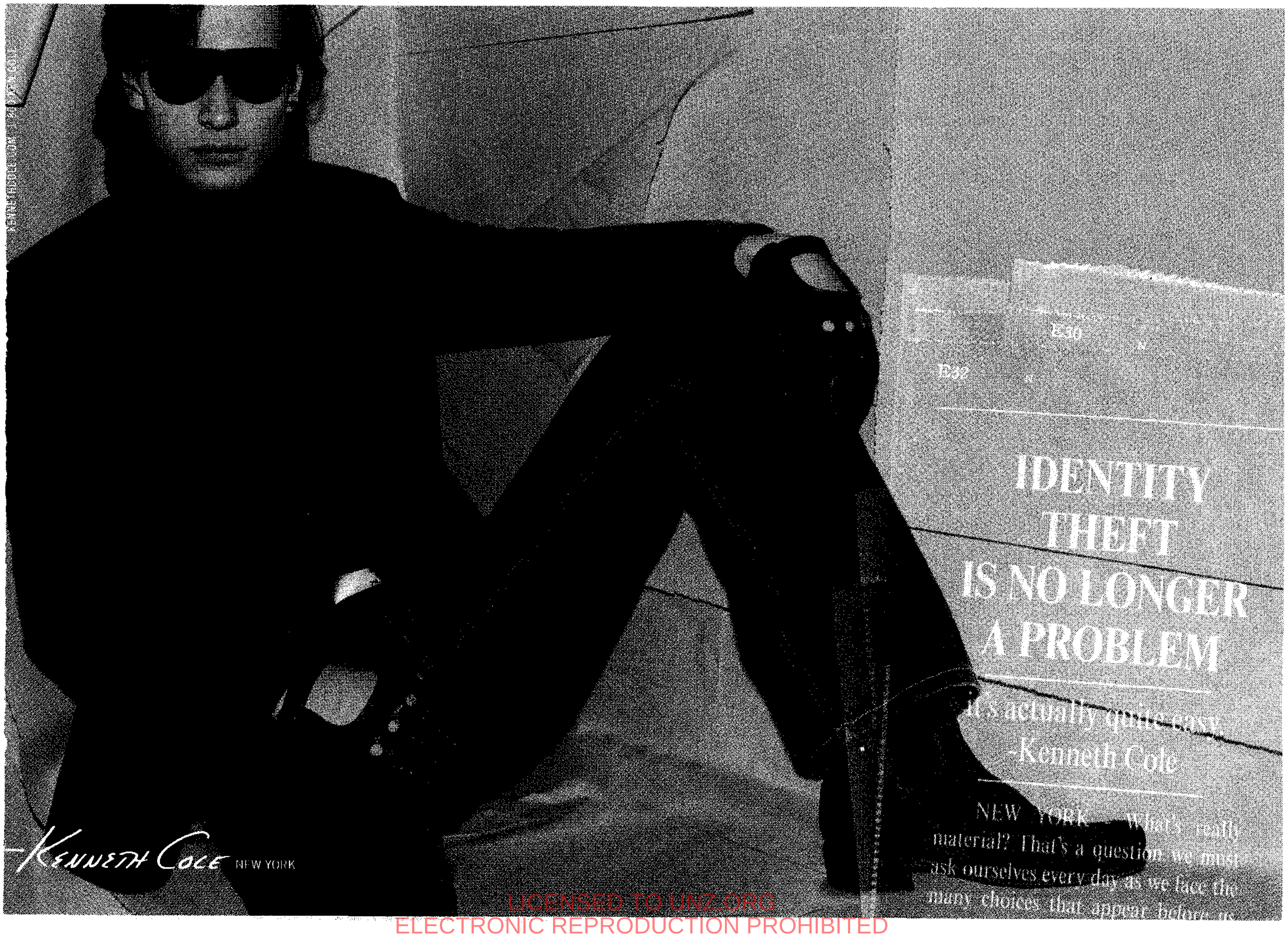
The T-11 is a sport-utility vehicle, which has since been released on the Chinese market as the Tiggo. It looks remarkably similar to the Toyota RAV4. Dinkel also planned to test the new crossover wagon known as the B-14, scheduled to hit the Chinese market later this year. Chery was upgrading its domestic product line, in part to prepare for entering the American market. The cars destined for the United States were still in the design-and-development stage, and one of the most formidable hurdles would be meeting American safety and emissions standards. Even though the T-11 and the B-14 won't be exported, Dinkel planned to evaluate the quality while showing the Chery engineers how Americans road-tested vehicles.

On a street in the development zone, he ran through a series of checks: accelerating, braking, turning. We passed a tractor cart full of bricks, a new air-conditioner factory, and a boy pissing in the grass. Dinkel sped up and swerved; a bus honked. In the back, the three engineers clutched at the ceiling. Finally, one of them asked me to translate a request: "Do you think we could go to a place without any other cars?"

That was easy: in China, there is always another, newer development zone just down the road. We drove north, past bulldozers, earthmovers, and the skeletons of future housing complexes, to Baoshun Road. Dinkel asked me to translate: "Tell them the gearbox is very notchy from second to third, and from fourth to fifth."

Dinkel is alert, soft-spoken, and small-framed. As a graduate student at the University of Michigan at Dearborn in the late sixties, he was the only guy in the emissions laboratory who could fit into the driver's seat of a Mazda Cosmo. When I asked why he had originally studied engineering, Dinkel said, "I didn't have a very bright guidance counsellor." In those days, people believed that anybody with good math scores should become an engineer. After briefly working at Chrysler, he switched to journalism. He was at *Road & Track* for twenty years, including two as editor-in-chief. During the past three decades, he had driven "practically every car that's ever been on the road."

At the west end of the factory strip,


E30
E32
IDENTITY THEFT IS NO LONGER A PROBLEM
It's actually quite easy.
-Kenneth Cole
NEW YORK — What's really material? That's a question we must ask ourselves every day as we face the many choices that appear before us
Kenneth Cole NEW YORK

between the nail factory and the air-conditioner-cover plant, stood an empty roundabout. To John Dinkel, it looked a lot like a skid pad. He accelerated to forty miles an hour, past a tepee of stacked bamboo that would be used to scaffold the next construction project. He held the turn, tires faintly squealing, and the roundabout flashed by: Nails, bamboo, air-conditioner covers. Nails, bamboo, air-conditioner covers. The three Chinese engineers were thrown together against the right side of the car.

The one in the middle was named Qi Haibo. He could have fit into the driver's seat of a Mazda Cosmo, along with a sack of groceries. He was twenty-two years old, and he had grown up on a farm in Inner Mongolia. His grandfather had moved there from Shaanxi Province ("probably because of famine or war"). Qi Haibo's father had had a fifth-grade education and his mother had attended one year of elementary school. They grew wheat, corn, and sunflowers.

The boy had always been the top student in his primary and middle schools. After high school, despite having no special interest in engineering, he attended Wuhan Polytechnic University. "I wanted to go to a good university, and I heard that computers and electronics were the best subjects for careers nowadays. So I chose those specialties when I took the entrance examination."

Last year, after attending a job fair at the college, he signed a contract with Chery. He believed that he would have more responsibility at a new company; the average age of a Chery employee is twenty-four. "I also liked the fact that it's not a joint venture. It's China's own auto company." He made less than two hundred dollars a month and lived in a four-man dormitory room.

After the test drive, I asked Qi Haibo what he had learned from John Dinkel. Qi said that the T-11 had a slight problem with driveshaft length, which meant that the outside wheel slipped a little on tight turns. The rear end of the B-14 floated a bit at high speeds. In particular, Qi admired Dinkel's skills at the wheel. Qi had received his driver's license the previous month.

Chery's early strategy—gleaning useful information from the wreckage of troubled automakers—culminated in a tiny vehicle called the QQ. In 2002, General Motors acquired a controlling interest in Daewoo Motors, the South Korean company, which had gone bankrupt. G.M. took the platform of a Daewoo minicar known as the Matiz, repackaged it under the name Chevrolet Spark, and prepared to start production in China.

In June of 2003, half a year before the Spark went on the market, Chery unveiled the QQ. It looked almost exactly like G.M.'s car but retailed for a quarter less: about six thousand dollars. Chery also introduced a sedan that appeared suspiciously similar to the Daewoo Magnus. Chery named that car the Son of the Orient.

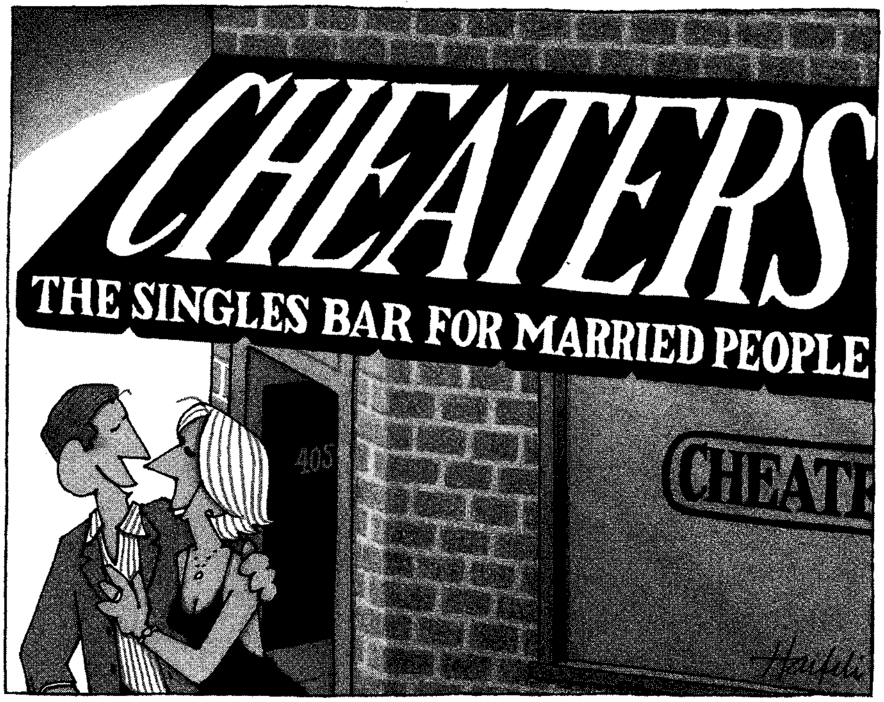
Chinese consumers never took to the Son of the Orient, but the QQ was an instant success. At less than twelve feet long, and with a 0.8-litre engine, it is even smaller than the Mini Cooper. The QQ was perfect for China's fledgling urban middle class, which hadn't been able to afford the joint-venture products. In 2003, nationwide passenger-car sales jumped by eighty per cent, allowing Chery and other small manufacturers to establish a strong position in the low-end market. Car prices in China have been dropping rapidly because of the new competition. Last year, Chery sold nearly five times as many QQs as G.M. sold Sparks.

In December of 2004, G.M. Daewoo filed a lawsuit in Shanghai, alleging that Chery had developed the QQ "through copying and unauthorized use of G.M. Daewoo's trade secrets." Simple copyright violations are rampant in China, but this case was more complicated: the implication was that top-secret designs had leaked out of South Korea.

When I visited the G.M. China offices in Shanghai, Timothy P. Stratford, the company's general counsel, handed me two photographs. In the first picture, two cars were parked side by side: the green one was the QQ, and the black one was the Matiz, the South Korean original. In the second picture, the doors had been switched: green on black, black on green.

"You would never find two competitors' cars where the doors could be swapped," Stratford explained. "It means that not only do they copy the door but everything else that is necessary to form the shape for the door. A door opening is kind of like a fingerprint for a car."

Chery executives haven't made many public statements about the case, apart from saying that they had received Chinese patents for the QQ (a point that would be moot if the designs had been obtained illegally). When I spoke with Lin Zhang, the general manager for Chery's International Division, he emphasized that the QQ was already on the market when he joined the company. But he denied that there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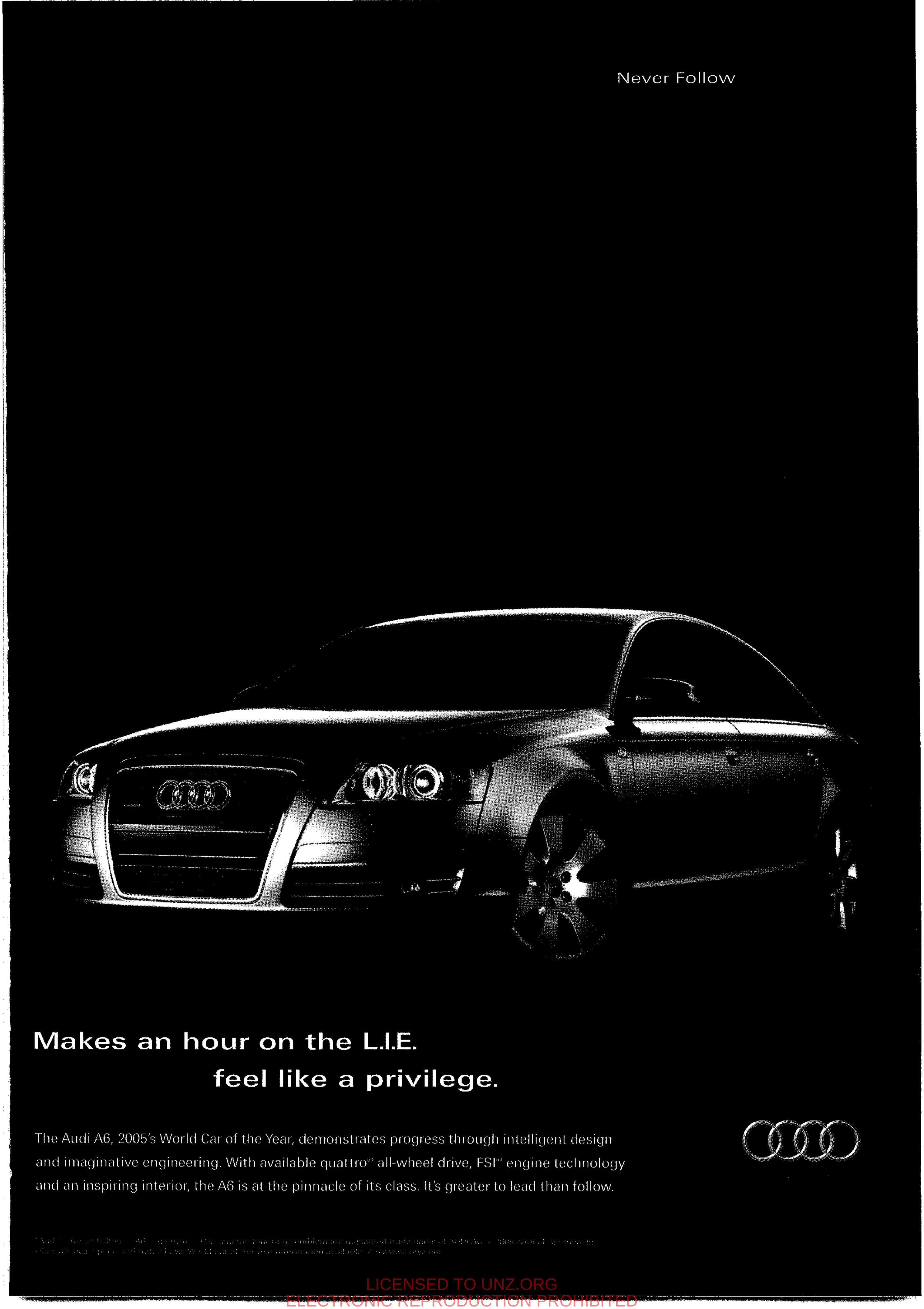

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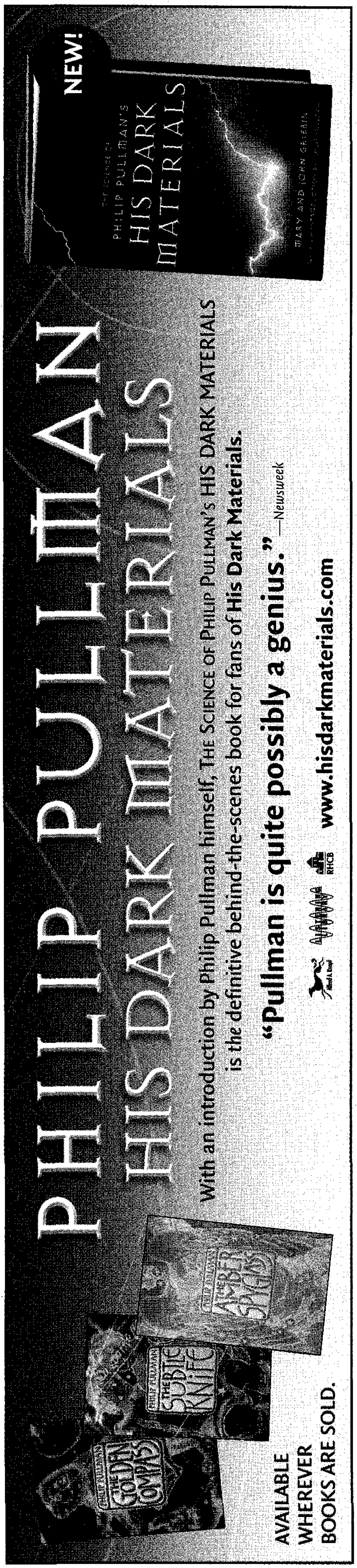

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had been any wrongdoing, and said that it was natural for a young company like Chery to legally develop something similar to a car that had been successful elsewhere.

"That's how you get started, at a primitive level, and then you move to another level," he said. "It's like when you start drawing. You don't begin by drawing a beautiful picture of your own—you imitate another picture. It's in the nature of any industry. It's how Sony and Hyundai and Toyota got started. They all started with something. And it's something they abandon quickly."

Zhang had joined Chery a year earlier. Born in Shanghai, he had a Ph.D. in mechanical engineering from the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor. He had worked for nine years for DaimlerChrysler in Detroit. He has two children, aged eight and ten, and they had been happy in American schools. But every year, when Zhang visited Shanghai, there was some new part of town that he didn't recognize, which made him think about how much he was missing. After a friend—another American-trained Chinese engineer—accepted a job at Chery, Zhang followed suit.

"If I stayed, I could see what I'd be doing in five or ten years," he told me. "The life will be relatively easy, but it's missing excitement. I thought that risk and reward usually come together."

Risk was part of Chery's culture, and even the QQ may have been a calculated gamble. Several independent analysts told me they doubted that the Chinese legal system was sophisticated enough to handle such a case. In addition, Chery was government-owned, and the Chinese had always dreamed of having a true national brand. G.M. Daewoo would have its day in court, but there was no guarantee that the foreign company would be treated fairly. And since Chery didn't intend to export the QQ to the United States, there wasn't much recourse in the American legal system.

Chery was still relatively small—eight thousand employees—but it had found a way to produce a hundred thousand vehicles a year without significant investment in design and engineering. Management appeared to be shifting strategies; an enormous R. & D. center had just been completed, and they had recently hired almost thirty foreign-trained engineers, like Zhang. The company was placing new emphasis on quality control, and every expert who visited their factories seemed impressed with the scale and sophistication. Ronald E. Harbour, an American consultant who specializes in auto-manufacturing, told me that Chery's aluminum-casting plant was so big that they were using only ten per cent of the space. "In China, they tend to build a lot of capacity ahead of demand," he said. "You just don't do that in the States."

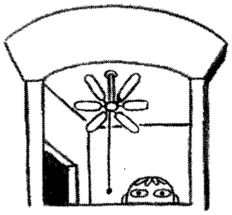
As a state-owned company, Chery doesn't have to answer to stockholders, and it's unclear how much money has been invested. One day, I visited the gigantic final assembly plant that produces the QQ and the Son of the Orient. A sign at the entrance said, in Chinese, "We Need Not Only to Work Hard, We Must Also Be Diligent, and More Important We Must Have a Sense of a National Mission." Nearby, a digital sign noted that the plant was producing two hundred and fifty-three QQs a day. Workers in blue uniforms moved the new cars along the assembly line. A manager named Hu Bin told me that, since 2003, they had steadily picked up the production pace, to meet growing demand. In the beginning, assembly-line stations in Hu's section had spent an average of three minutes performing their tasks; now they required only two minutes and five seconds. Hu Bin said that soon Chery would start paying workers by the car instead of by the hour. He asked me if American manufacturers sometimes used that tactic to boost production; I said no, and mentioned the word "union." Hu hoped that his section would drop eighteen more seconds by the end of 2005. That was about the same time that people expected a court decision on the G.M. lawsuit.

Another morning at breakfast in the Guoxin Hotel, Malcolm Bricklin said that Wuhu needed a new port on the Yangtze.

"They have to dig deeper, pave big streets," he said. "You have to be able to put five thousand cars on a ship in five hours."

In the United States, Bricklin was

searching for dealers willing to pay up to four million dollars each for the rights to sell Chinese cars. Visionary Vehicles also needed a new American brand name. "It's got to be something that fits but doesn't come from the name 'tiger' or 'dragon,'" Bricklin said. "I happen to like the name Chery." (G.M.'s lawyers, however, subsequently sent Bricklin a warning to the effect that Chery, besides being one letter away from Cheery, is also one letter away from Chevy and possible legal action.)



Over the past decade, as the Chinese economy has boomed, the spectre of direct competition has become increasingly disturbing to many people in the United States. China National Offshore Oil Corporation's recent bid for Unocal raised concerns about how national security might be compromised if the Chinese gain control of a major American oil company. (The intense scrutiny resulted in CNOOC withdrawing its bid; Unocal was acquired instead by the Chevron Corporation.) But it might be even more unsettling to look across the Pacific and recognize elements that once seemed quintessentially American: the wide highways and the instant cities, the boundless optimism and pragmatism, the cutthroat business instinct and the hunger for new resources.

One can spot the same weaknesses, too. When I spoke to Michael Dunne, the president of the consulting firm Automotive Resources Asia, in Shanghai, he wondered if the appeal of Chery's low cost would be significant enough to distinguish a new brand in America. There's a history of foreign automakers—Hyundai, for instance—stumbling upon their first exposure to American consumers, usually because of poor quality. (In June, two Visionary Vehicles executives resigned—one of them was Pierre Gagnon, a president and chief operating officer—voicing doubts about the company's ability to live up to Bricklin's promises.)

In the U.S., Toyota succeeded because of its meticulousness—something Detroit has long lacked. And Dunne believes that the Chinese share Detroit's flaw. "The Chinese are a little like Americans," he said. "They want the touchdown. They want the home run. *Women hen congming*." He was quoting an expression the Chinese sometimes use: "We are very clever." Dunne continued, "But I don't see the patience and perseverance. It's more like 'We can leapfrog.'"

One evening in Wuhu, Yin Tongyao, the president of Chery, who generally avoids the press, agreed to talk with a group of reporters. We met late at night in a conference room of the Guoxin Hotel; Yin wore a suit and tie, as if he'd just left the office. He is in his early forties and looks younger. But when I asked about his education he spoke as if describing ancient history.

"At the time I left for college," he said, "I had never even ridden in a passenger car before." He explained that in those days the top graduates were assigned to jobs in truck factories, because China didn't have a market for passenger cars. He had been a bad student, he said with a self-deprecating laugh, and thus he was sent off to the northeast. I asked about the company's strengths.

"All we have is our aggression," he said. "We have no brand name, no recognition, nothing. We are simply aggressive."

I couldn't sleep the last night in Wuhu. The long drive to Beijing lay ahead, and light and noise filtered into my room. At four-thirty, I finally got up and looked out the window. Across the street, the Conch factory hummed with overtime labor; its workers were producing PVC window frames. The Visionary Vehicles team had left the day before. I was the last American in the Guoxin Hotel.

I walked outside and started the Jetta. I drove through the development zone, where the factories, open for the night shift, were illuminated from within, like paper lanterns. My headlights cut across empty streets.

It was dawn when I crossed the new Yangtze bridge and got on the expressway. A few miles outside Wuhu, I passed an exit sign for a place called Wuwei. It was an ancient Taoist phrase: Do Nothing. In this region, there was another city, called Wuxi: No Tin. Once, in Sichuan Province, I took a bus through Asbestos. That was a tough name for a small city, but it was better than having nothing at all. ♦

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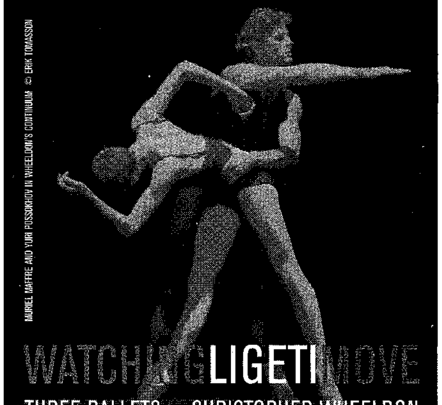
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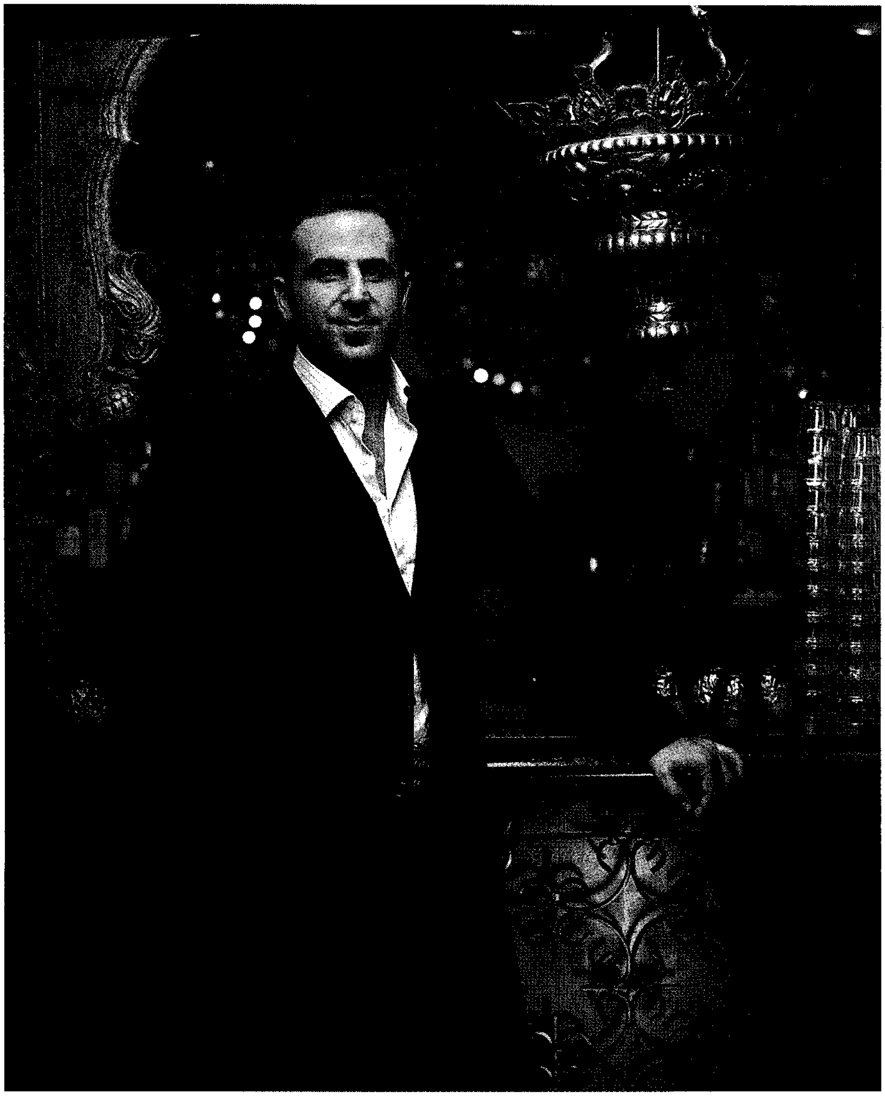
ANNALS OF NIGHT LIFE

OUT ON THE TOWN

A young real-estate mogul aims for an empire of glitz.

BY DANA GOODYEAR



L.A.'s latest booster, Sam Nazarian, at Prey. Photograph by Robert Maxwell.

Sam Nazarian, the gregarious thirty-year-old C.E.O. of a restaurant-hotel-club-and-film group in Los Angeles, is six feet four and heavily cologned, with meaty cheeks and a soul patch. He wears a dense gold watch and opal cufflinks and a slinky bracelet made of medieval crosses and diamonds. Nazarian, who comes from a prominent Persian Jewish family in L.A., owns a night club, Shelter, on the Sunset Strip, and another, Prey, in West Hollywood, and a pan-Asian restaurant, Yu, in Santa Monica. A few years ago, Nazarian decided to call his company S.B.E., after his lawyers suggested that its previous name, Samyboy Entertainment, lacked gravitas, and in January he hired the French designer Philippe Starck to design restaurants, clubs, and hotels for him. Now, equipped with a list of guiding principles conceived by a branding guru he hired in July (S.B.E. should be "influential," "technically savvy," and convey a "lifestyle mentality"), and using Los Angeles as his base and test market, Nazarian hopes to become a sort of Terence Conran for the Juicy Couture set.

Nazarian's first collaboration with Starck, a Japanese restaurant called Katsuya, will open in Brentwood in early 2006. Over the next several years, he intends to build about a dozen more Starck-designed projects, including a seventeen-thousand-square-foot "mega" Shelter in Hollywood, a "mega" Prey in Las Vegas, a hotel in South Beach, Miami, a supper club called Slab in the space that the old Shelter currently occupies, and Katsuyas in Las Vegas, Century City, the new Staples Center Entertainment Complex in downtown Los Angeles, and in London's Millennium Dome. He is also negotiating to partner with a large gay club in West Hollywood, which he hopes to replicate in Vegas, San Francisco, Miami, and Dallas ("There are homosexuals everywhere," he says), and is working on a bookstore-organic-coffee-shop concept with the publisher Benedikt Taschen. ("Benedikt has an amazing brand. And as much as I don't read books, I love pictures.") With Starck, he plans to develop at least five more restaurant chains and a line of four-and-a-half-to-five-star hotels. What he is counting on is that, as Eric Garcetti, the city-council member who represents Hollywood, puts it, "people want a version of McDonald's for their own class."

In Nazarian's office at S.B.E., which is housed in a low gray stucco building fringed with spiny green sedum, there are eight flat screens, a zebra-skin rug, and, mounted on the wall, a golden shovel. It's a memento of a development deal, but, after a few hours with Nazarian, it begins to suggest another use. One morning in late July, he assembled Starck's design team around his black-glass conference table to talk about a three-hundred-room hotel on a two-and-a-half-acre lot at a busy intersection where Los Angeles meets Beverly Hills. (Starck spends his summers on an island in the Mediterranean and was unavailable.) Nazarian said that he had been offered the hotel for ninety million dollars. If the deal went forward, the property would become the flagship of the new hotel line.

Bruno Borrione, an interior designer who has worked for Starck for twenty years, and who designed all the Ian Schrager hotels with him, sat at the head of the table. He was wearing a green-and-white tiki-patterned shirt and a nubby ponytail, and stabbed at a stack of pancakes in a take-out box. "This maple syrup—*ucch*," he muttered. Behind him were two metal easels, each with a large laminated map pinpointing the businesses that Nazarian considers competitors. One shows all the good hotels in Hollywood, West Hollywood, and Beverly Hills; the other restaurants like the Ivy, Spago, Mr. Chow. Gary Zimberg, S.B.E.'s vice-president of development, says, "Sam doesn't wait for a deal to come to him. He says, 'That would be a great place for X, Y, Z—find out who the owner is, go.'"

Nazarian, sitting before his own take-out box, tried to set an optimistic, authoritative tone. "I think as far as building this new luxury brand, this is where it really gets exciting," he said. "It's the first time that you guys are really looking at a property that has so much space. It's really going to be exciting when we bring Starck in—"

"No," Borrione interrupted. "It's not the first time."

"Not just size as far as room count," Nazarian said. "I'm talking about the amenities—the ballroom . . ."

"We have done a ballroom."

"Not in the U.S., not in a Schrager," Zimberg said defensively.

"Yes, there is," Borrione said.

Nazarian moved on to the issue of a rooftop pool, and his idea to convert some of the rooms to condominiums. "That's gravy for us, that would push us over the top as far as an investment," he said. "The next time you guys come in, with Starck, I want to take you on a tour. The biggest hotel that has the best property is the Bel-Air. It's a haven up there, it's beautiful. Gardens, and ducks walking. I mean, you just feel like you're in Tahiti. But the hotel itself is sh— I mean, it needs a major renovation. The Beverly Hills Hotel, on Sunset, we'll look at that, too. We've got the Four Seasons. Those are more five-and-a-half-to-six-star hotels. We're not competing on that level. The hotels we're competing against are infill, urban resort destinations: the Four Seasons, the Peninsula. This hotel's very similar to the Peninsula." He got up and demonstrated on the hotel map. "Here you have pretty much all the hotels on our comp list. Everyone said, 'Wow, how you gonna get people there?'—even though it's Beverly Hills. I took this, and I made an image with all the restaurants." He gestured at the other map. "This is all the energy of the city, and it is centrally located. So then it becomes a little easier. That's why the model that we talked about is letting this be a five-star experience—luxury—then giving people the restaurants and clubs around it. The same way Ian Schrager put the bar *in* the hotel, now we have them around, and by staying here you have access to all these things. That's the model."

Borrione asked about the timing.

"We should be under contract in a week," Nazarian said. "And then we're talking about a thirty-day close."

"By October—"

"No, by the middle of September. When we sign, our deposits go hard. It's a very quick transaction." He went on to discuss a sixty-acre swath that the Anschutz Entertainment Group owns in Berlin, where he hopes to build two mixed-use condominiums and a hotel. "We have the ability of really creating the new city center for the biggest capital—the capital of the biggest country in Europe," he said. "It's been offered to us to go in and bring in Starck, to bring in Daniel Libeskind, bring in Rem Koolhaas, bring in some Japanese guys. It's all dirt right now." He saw it as a potential mecca for media companies. "We could relocate MTV Europe, Universal Music Europe, everything Europe. That's about three and a half years out, and it's just to help master-plan the whole thing and bring these guys architects and designers, and we're thinking about making it a whole green, environmentally friendly environment." Later, he remembered to say that he was talking *about* those architects, not yet to them.

Nazarian's exuberance in promoting unrealized plans both small and grand is natural to Los Angeles, a city founded by boosters and conjurers. There may be some dim sense of this legacy behind Nazarian's regular insistence that his commitment is "long-term." But at least while Nazarian—who admits that "in many ways it doesn't take a lot to get on

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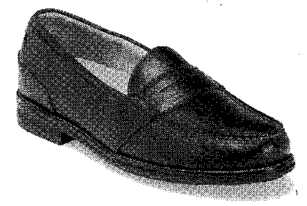

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the map here"—continues to spend liberally, he will be celebrated as a prophet. "Visionary" was the word calligraphed on a city proclamation, signed by Garcetti and presented to Nazarian on his birthday, in July. Garcetti, who has been instrumental in the reëmergence of Hollywood Boulevard as a glamorous place—there are now night clubs and a nice hotel, and, for the first time since the nineteen-fifties, the area is attracting stars—told me that he had invited Nazarian to "think of Hollywood as your laboratory." Brent Bolthouse, a promoter in Los Angeles for the past couple of decades, has seen countless club owners come and go. Nazarian strikes him as something different—a businessman rather than a romantic. "I made my whole career here by taking weird, quirky, run-down restaurants and making them work, not by taking multimillion-dollar spaces designed by Philippe Starck," Bolthouse said. But he has decided that the underground scene is over; he is looking forward to working in well-designed spaces with good lighting and good sound, and is talking to Nazarian about a partnership.

"Sam feels a duty, he wants to make something for the city," Starck says. "We shall change the face of L.A. We will boost L.A., and these concepts will be prototypes and will be duplicated in all the U.S. and all the world. That's why L.A. will become, through Sam, a sort of producer of new concepts in hotels, bars, lounges, restaurants, and things like that."

The problem with Los Angeles, in Nazarian's view, is that people are unaccustomed to acting like city dwellers: "They get lulled into, I'm going to live in my beautiful gated home and kind of kick back and take my shoes off and wear my jeans." With Starck's designs, some not yet hired high-profile chefs, and spontaneous-seeming, unannounced shows—Cirque du Soleil-style performances, concerts by rappers like Ja Rule, and so forth—Nazarian hopes to lure people from their domestic enclaves, and, in doing so, to correct a central misapprehension about Los Angeles. "It's not this shallow existence that we live here," he says. "It's not the truckloads of young beautiful guys and girls who want to come here and become actors and sell their souls to whatever they have to, to get into movies. It's a center of art, it's a center of culture, it's a center of entertainment. Everyone talks about L.A. as all these shallow people, where all anyone says is 'What do you drive?' and 'Where do you live?' What I'm hoping is that when you look back in twenty years you really think that L.A. means something."

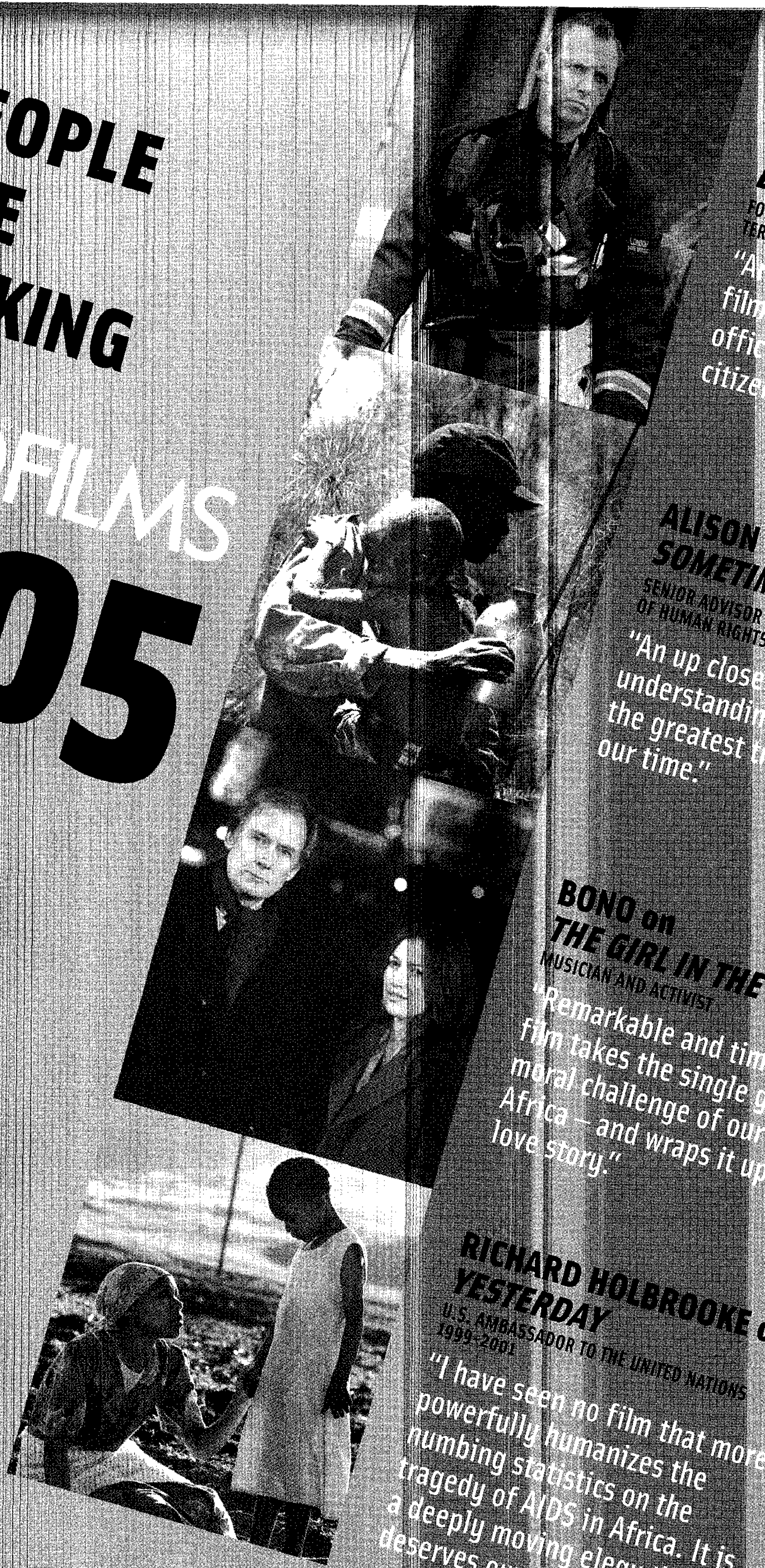
MY LIFE AS A TEEN-AGER

I felt "remorse for civilization."
My nostalgia was buoyant,
fat as cartoon clouds.
I sang teen-age French, sashaying down the street:
"*Bonjour, je t'aime, comment tu t'appelles?*"
The apartment buildings leaned down at me.
I proclaimed my love for the past,
wearing fitted clothes from the forties.
I came out against pointlessness.
I drank crème de menthe like a potion.
All night boys danced in the living room,
mouthing the words to the Go-Gos,
shrugging into the night's advances,
then took their stolen kisses from girls
fat like Troy, ready for the sieging.
In the morning, the sun was a cutout in the smog.
Every window was a picture window;
the dawn grew into day, red, orange, blue,
in perfect disorder. The partygoers were outside,
building a monument out of a blowtorch
and something old and green. From where
I stood, the tree, de-leafed and nude,
appeared to bow to me,
and what had long been silent grew.

—*Meghan O'Rourke*

Nazarian lives in an eleven-thousand-square-foot contemporary mansion in a gated community called the Summit, in the butler belt of Mulholland Drive. He bought the house for twelve and a half million, and keeps it filled with the furniture, down to the mattress, of its previous occupant, Jennifer Lopez. He owns fifteen black sports cars, including a Porsche Carrera GT ("This is one of the fastest cars in the world. It does over two hundred. It does zero to sixty in 3.8 seconds") and a Ferrari F430 ("This car you can probably get up to one-twenty in eight seconds"). Lynn Merrill, his chauffeur and valet, drives him in a Ford Excursion, which, according to Nazarian, was bulletproofed for a Middle Eastern dignitary.

To hear Nazarian tell it, his life has followed a more or less predictable pattern: voluble roguishness leading to mishap, which turns unaccountably into success. One evening, sitting in a blocky gray suède armchair in his living room, drinking a vodka-tonic prepared by Merrill and using a paper-towel coaster ("Museum rules," an employee said), he described his recent acquisition of a purple painting that was hanging on a wall. It was an archetypal tale, complete with unabashed boasting, cheerful self-deprecation, a smattering of significant names, reckless generosity, and, of course, a profitable dénouement: "I was in New York at Christie's auction house selling a Keith Haring, which I had bought from Charlie Sheen. It was kind of neat. The sophistication of New York is a whole different world from Los Angeles. So I was sitting at Christie's and I was behind Eli Broad"—a prominent Los Angeles investor and philanthro-



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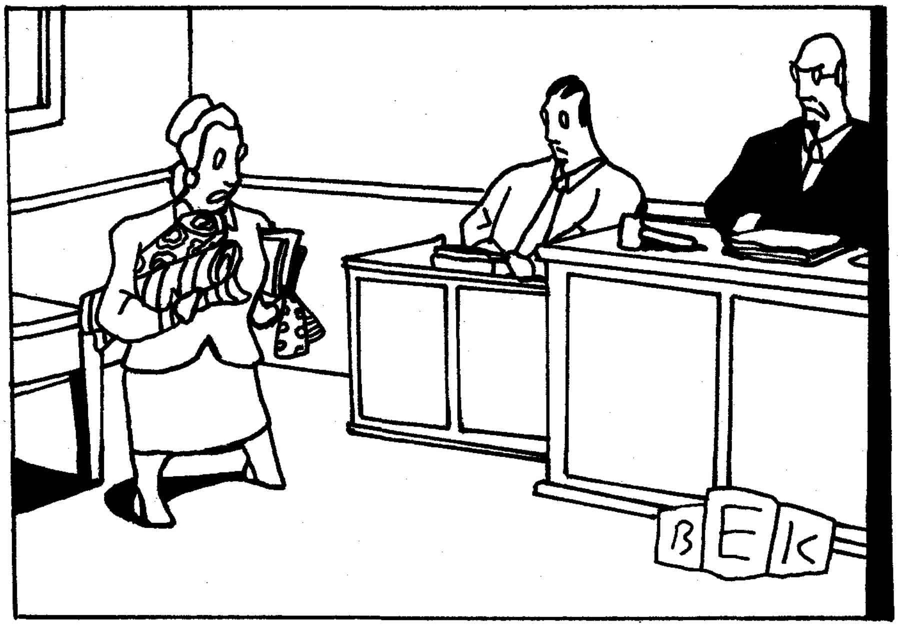

“If it please Your Honor, may I redo the bench?”

pist—“and I thought, I’m in the right seat! We sold the Keith Haring for a lot of money. You can see why people get addicted to that exhilaration. We went afterward to celebrate at an art dealer’s house up on Fifth Avenue. The whole purpose of the party was to sell this painting”—he pointed to the purple canvas. “I had had a couple drinks, and was a little drunk, and I go, ‘So what’s going on?’ and the art dealer said, ‘I’m trying to sell this painting.’ I had just bought this house, and I kind of like it, it’s amazing. ‘Well, I don’t like the *frame*,’ I told the guy. The artist designed the frame.” Nazarian chuckled heartily and lit a cigarette. “‘Can we change the frame?’ I asked him. He’s like, ‘*No.*’” More laughing. “Long story short, I made a deal with the guy right there on the spot. He seemed a little stressed, showing people this painting. So I was, like, ‘If you were to sell this painting, you’d have a good time?’ The whole time I’m completely drunk, keep in mind. He goes, ‘Yeah.’ I go, ‘Well, how much do you want for it?’ ‘We’re asking two-twenty.’ I go, ‘I’ll give you one-eighty. Right now. Done.’

“So the next morning I wake up and my controller called me from the office and said, ‘Sam, did you buy a painting last night?’ I’m like, ‘No.’ I had no recollection of it at all at first, literally, whatsoever.” He guffawed and said hastily, “And luckily I did really well, because now it’s worth a lot more.”

Until recently, Nazarian had been living in “an amazing little house” (four thousand square feet in Brentwood, near the Getty Center) where, he said, “I had a three-hundred-degree view of L.A. And you could walk around butt-ass naked there.” The Lopez house wasn’t yet on the market when he saw it, but, he said, “I literally made an offer, and the next day we’re in escrow, and thirty days later we just closed.” (He characterizes the sale of the Brentwood house as having set a per-square-foot record.) A few minutes passed, in which he recounted the origins of his new friendship with Quincy Jones and showed off the screening room that Lopez had installed for her ex-fiancé Ben Affleck. Then, leading the way through the master bedroom and into a white-tile-and-turquoise-glass bathroom, with a white ostrich-skin upholstered vanity stool and an immense walk-in closet, he said, “Let me show you one thing J-Lo left behind. This is the ‘hers’ bathroom. I’m like, Why do women have to have the big bathroom? I took it.” He went into the shower and emerged with a white plastic loofah on a rope. “Everyone I know says to sell it on eBay. No! I look at it every morning when I get in the shower.”

Nazarian was born in Tehran. His family moved to Los Angeles after the 1979 revolution, when he was three; his sisters, Sharon and Shulamit, were eleven and fifteen. (His older brother, David, had come to the United States a few years earlier.) Younes, his father, grew up poor in the Jewish ghetto in Tehran, worked in Israel during the nineteen-fifties, and made a fortune in Iran manufacturing construction equipment. In Los Angeles, using money owed by German companies to his confiscated factory in Iran, Younes and his brother bought Standard Tool & Die, an engineering firm with government contracts. In the eighties, the brothers invested in a communications company that later merged with the nascent technology outfit Qualcomm. The company went public in 1991; by the late nineties, a family member told me, Younes’s shares were worth more than a billion dollars.

Sam’s first endeavor after college (he dropped out of U.S.C.) was to start a cell-phone company with a friend. He says he invested twenty-five thousand dollars and, two years later, sold his portion for just under a million. Then he joined his brother and father in the family investment house, where his role was to expand the real-estate holdings. He estimates that, by the age of twenty-eight, he had invested between a hundred and a hundred and fifty million dollars in apartment buildings, houses, and hotels, including the Viceroy and the Sheraton at the airport. At around this time, he established his own company, bought Shelter and Prey, and began to provide bridge loans to independent films. By now, S.B.E.’s film division has produced five movies, and a sixth is under way, though none has yet been released.

Nazarian’s sister Sharon, who teaches East Asian economic development at U.C.L.A. and helped found the Israel Studies Program at the university, understands his drive as a survival instinct. “His childhood took place in a period of transition for our family,” she says. “He knew that money was valuable, that money would help him get the things he wanted. His role models—our father, our uncle, our brother—were businessmen. Sam got the message very early that being economically successful is

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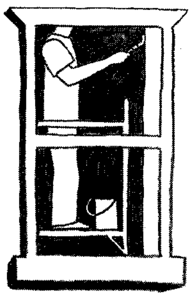
Nazarian says that one of his childhood pastimes was ironing dollar bills; Sharon remembers him selling grocery-store baseball cards to classmates at an inflated price. Either way, his romance with the deal is intense. One Thursday night in June, he went to a party at a cavernous restaurant called Le Dôme to celebrate the opening of a West Coast office of MGM Mirage Resorts, the Las Vegas casino conglomerate. He moved confidently through the rooms, past a melting raw bar, to where the restaurant owner stood with some friends beside a bloody roast. Nazarian shook the owner's hand heartily and received claps to the shoulder and back. "Are you selling it to me?" he said warmly, by way of hello. A trim Frenchman came over and said, "Is Sam trying to buy this place? He's buying everything else in town." Nazarian gamely flattered the Frenchman in return—he made his name in taxi-cab advertising, Nazarian said; he was featured in that month's *Angeleno* magazine—and walked away. He did not get far before another transaction found him, in the form of an old girlfriend, who wanted to get on the list that night at Prey. "Anything for you," he said, and kissed her on the cheek. In the front room, he sidled up to a dapper bald man named Bob Mancari—"He's the *man* in Vegas at the Bellagio, he literally runs Vegas"—who was standing with a date, a woman with Slavic features and blond hair the texture of frosting. Nazarian made an investment of good will: "The one thing I love better than the Bellagio—Russians!"



Twenty minutes later, Nazarian rounded up a few friends and went to Koi, a Japanese restaurant with a throng of paparazzi in front. "I almost bought this place," he said, automatically. (Instead, he hired Katsuya Uechi, who designed the menu, to be the chef at Katsuya.) He didn't have a reservation, but he got a table anyway, next to a booth full of more friends, including a man who was reputed to have invented the bong. After dinner, Nazarian was driven across the street to Prey, an unmarked concrete building with potted shrubs and heavy doors, currently done up in an African-safari theme. There was a papier-mâché elephant head on the wall, and the waitresses were dressed in thigh-high stretchy boots and "North African" bronze-sequined bikini tops. The music was loud, the air-conditioning was cold, and the women far outnumbered the men. (It is a rule of night-club demographics that men need women to look at but women are content to look at one another.) A group of five in tight black minidresses—a bachelorette party—accosted Nazarian. One attached herself to him, like a frightened cat to a tree. Midnight approached. A Hilton sister made her way to the front of the line outside. Nazarian had another drink, while a pretty young woman in culottes applied lipstick nearby. He took the lipstick from her and pretended to slather it on his lips. She shrieked "Sammy!" in ineffectual protest.

The site of the future Katsuya, the first Nazarian project that Starck will complete in L.A., is an unassuming storefront in Brentwood, next to an eyeglass shop. For the inside, Starck has designed a Japanese house, made of hemlock, with a gabled roof. The room within a room will contain a traditional robata bar, fuelled by petrified-wood coal, and booths decorated with blown-up photographs of contemporary Japanese pop stars in geisha paint. (During a meeting with Starck's team, Nazarian had explained, "In every location we open, we use a different rock star. And have the rock star come, blah, blah, blah, it's a whole marketing campaign on that level.") The adjoining room will be a lounge, with seedier, more debauched accents: the same gabled roof, but in a darker wood; the same geisha-painted pop stars, but sweaty, with their makeup smeared—"like they've been hanging out with Sam for a couple of hours," Zimberg said. The construction will cost five hundred dollars a square foot, but, as Zimberg said, winking, "It's not nice to put a price tag on art."

Starck says that Katsuya is the "most reasonable" of his designs for Nazarian. Slab, the first supper club, will be more radical, a two-story concrete box on the east end of the Sunset Strip with glass walls facing east and west and a forty-five-hundred-square-foot roof deck. The décor, suggestive of a seventeenth-century library, with fireplaces and wood and candelabra chandeliers, will be "a slice of dream," Starck says. "A slice, like you cut a slice of sausage, but a slice of dream."

At the moment, the property is occupied by Nazarian's club Shelter, a ramshackle building that looks like a place where you might go for lobster rolls at a derelict New England pier. ("Starck's first reaction was 'Wow, this place looks really, really, really horrible,' " Starck's agent, Michele Caniato, recalled.) It was once the rock club Coconut Teaszer, which Jack Weiss, the councilman who represents the club's district—and also counts Nazarian and most of his family as constituents—said had been "synonymous with condoms, beer bottles, and blaring music." Weiss is pleased that Nazarian took over the space, and is hopeful about the prospects for Slab—for one thing, it will mean more tax dollars for the city. But, he said, he's had "a hard time selling Slab in the neighborhood, because people have been so accustomed to viewing night clubs as being full of whatever the L.A. version of the bridge-and-tunnel crowd is." (Jimmy Bryant, a resident of the neighborhood for thirty-two years, mournfully recalls the time when the place was "a very nice restaurant, sort of a Belgian restaurant, and all the people in the neighborhood used to go there for dinner." He doesn't think the neighbors will go to Slab, unless "they get a freebie.")

Nazarian remains imperturbable. "Shelter, where Slab is going to be now, was a perfect example of really hitting every roadblock we could have," he said. "Signage, homeowners, parking. Everything we had to do we did, and at the end of the day we're going to have a property that's a jewel on the Sunset Strip."

A few weeks ago, Nazarian had a twelve-o'clock meeting with Lionel Ohayon and Siobhan Barry, of Icrave, a New York design firm that he had hired to redo a little bar in Hollywood that will open in the fall. At twelve-fifteen, the

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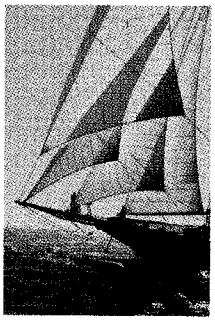

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GET WET

meeting was rescheduled for one. At one-ten, Nazarian came in, smiling, with his shirttails untucked and his jeans rumpled. "What's up, brother?" he said, clasping Ohayon's hand warmly. "'Entourage'! She looks good, baby." Nazarian looked at Reza Roohi, his partner in Shelter and Prey and the president of operations for the clubs. "Did you see Lionel's girl on 'Entourage'?"

As Ohayon began his presentation, Nazarian sat deferentially, biting his nails, staring intently, and asking a few practical questions. (The ramp—had Ohayon considered the A.D.A. requirements?) The challenge of the space, Ohayon said, was its size. It was so small that the entire thing would have to be V.I.P.; no table could be perceived as bad. His solution was to create a baffle around the entryway, diverting people toward a narrow runway along the length of the room, and preventing any tables from getting pinched off by the door. "This way, you're not going to have a situation where you have clients you think are equally important but they think they got the shit table," he said. "You're not going to have that problem."

"There's no hierarchy," Barry said.

The main design feature, Ohayon went on, would be a scrim on which video art would be projected. He was met with blank looks. "You know? How there are so many talented young artists in L.A.?" Nazarian didn't seem to know what Ohayon was talking about, but appeared unconcerned. "This is definitely a commitment," he said, thumbing an e-mail on his Blackberry. "But it's the only thing that will make this work."

For good measure, Ohayon offered an alternative set of plans—"a lot more fractal and a lot more design-y." Nazarian glanced up. "Too confusing," he said, and pushed the new plans aside. "I think you got it right off the bat." He popped a few raw almonds in his mouth and suggested they talk about the menu.

"Is it food-food?" Ohayon asked.

"No, it's tapas, share stuff," Nazarian said. "We're going to do it very eclectic. Just like the Viceroy. Chicken and waffles, caviar—the best kind of caviar, and crème fraîche—sashimi, mini burgers. Eclectic and unique. And then there's the breakfast thing."

Roohi, a taciturn man with the physique of a bouncer, moved around the end of the table, the better to square off against Nazarian. "It won't work," he said. "Let's talk to reality. I've been doing this twenty-two years. You've been sitting at the table for five hours, there's liquor all over the table, you're drunk—you're going to sit there and eat breakfast? You've got to be kidding me." Nazarian attempted to interrupt, saying that people often go out to eat at greasy spoons after the clubs close. Roohi continued, "I have never, ever, *ever* in my life known anyone who would sit at a table and get drunk and then eat breakfast."

"O.K., let's get off this," Nazarian said, laughing.

"You gotta leave—you just drank five bottles of vodka!" Roohi said. "And we don't want drunk people coming from other places. We don't make money from that. What? From selling two eggs?"

The conversation moved on to ice machines and urinals and smoke eaters, and Nazarian, in a windmill of hand clasping, excused himself to join a conference call.

A few days later, he revised his thoughts about the breakfast food. It didn't matter what *he* thought about it. "If you want it, we'll get it for you," he said. "That's the kind of feel." Besides, he said, the club was meant to be a long-term kind of thing, and the story could always change. ♦

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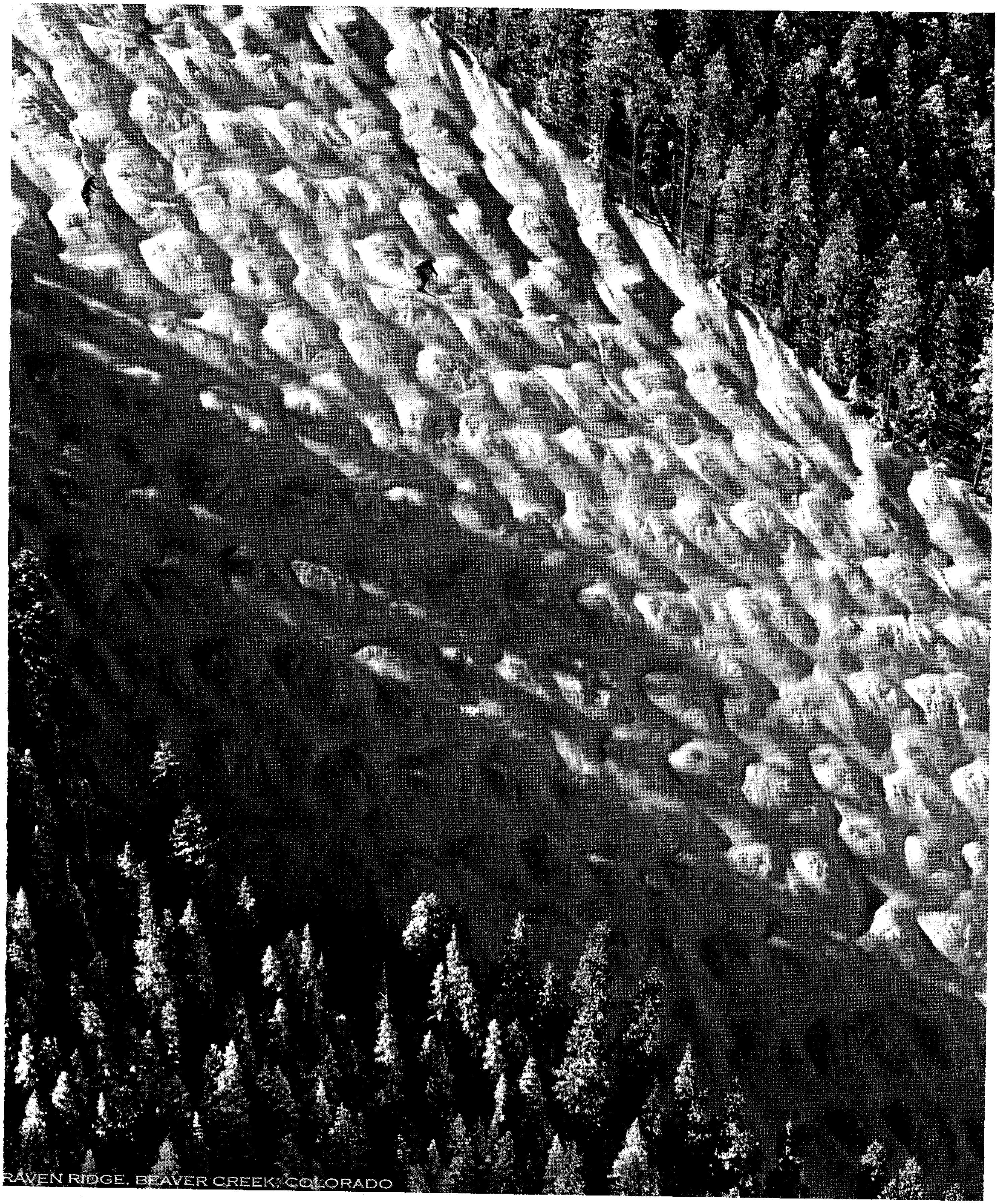

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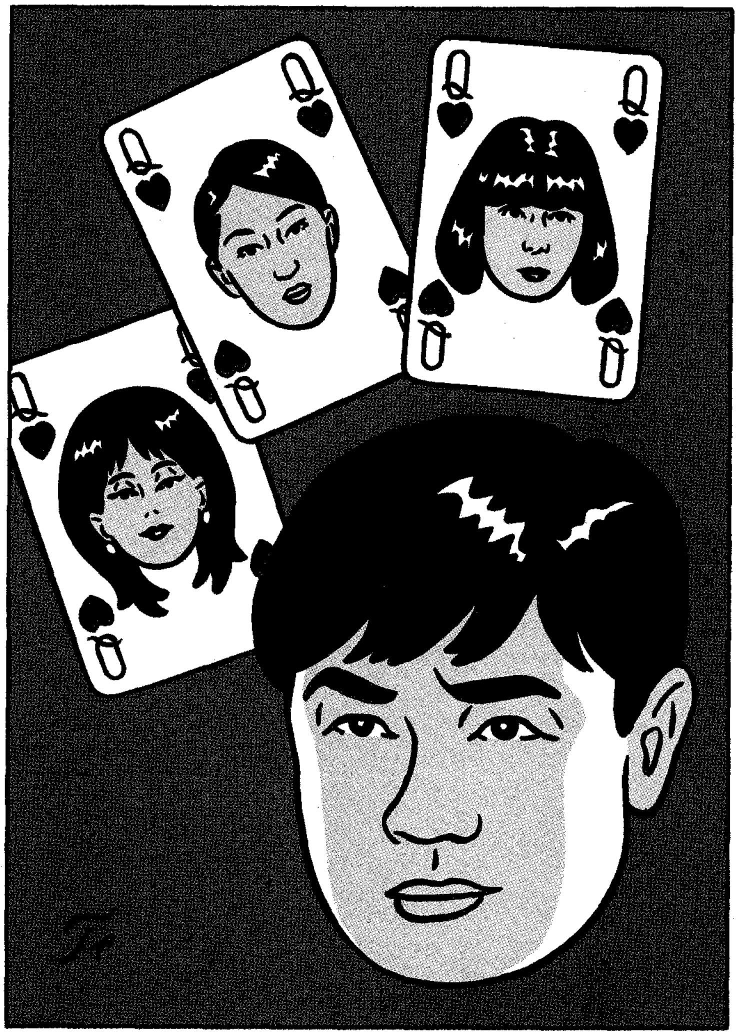
FICTION

THE KIDNEY-SHAPED STONE THAT MOVES EVERY DAY

BY HARUKI MURAKAMI



FLOCH

Junpei was sixteen years old when his father made a surprising pronouncement. True, they were father and son; the same blood flowed through their veins. But they were not so close that they often opened their hearts to each other, and it was extremely rare for Junpei's father to offer him views of life that might (perhaps) be called philosophical. So that day's exchange would remain vivid in his memory long after he had forgotten what prompted it.

"Among the women a man meets in his life, there are only three who have real meaning for him. No more, no less," his father said—or, rather, declared. He spoke coolly but with utter certainty, as he might have in noting that the earth takes a year to revolve around the sun. Junpei listened in silence, partly because his father's speech was so unexpected; he could think of nothing to say on the spur of the moment.

"You will probably become involved with many women in the future," his father continued, "but you will be wasting your time if a woman is the wrong one for you. I want you to remember that."

Later, several questions formed in Junpei's young mind: Has my father already met his three women? Is my mother one of them? And, if so, what happened with the other two? But he was not able to ask his father these questions. As noted earlier, the two were not on such close terms that they could speak heart to heart.

When Junpei was eighteen, he left home and went to college in Tokyo, where over time he became involved with several women, one of whom had "real meaning" for him. Before he could express his feelings, however (by nature, it took him longer than most people to express his feelings), she married his best friend, and soon after that became a mother. For the time being, therefore, she had to be eliminated from the list of possibilities that life had to offer Junpei. He had to harden his heart and sweep her from his mind, as a result of which the number of women remaining who would have real meaning in his life—if he accepted his father's theory—was reduced to two.

Whenever Junpei met a new woman, he would ask himself, Is this a woman who has real meaning for me? And the question would create a dilemma. For even as he continued to hope (as who does not?) that he would meet someone who had real meaning for him, he was afraid of playing his few remaining cards too early. Having failed to connect with the very first important Other he encountered, Junpei had lost confidence in his ability—the crucial ability—to give outward expression to love at the appropriate time and in the appropriate manner. *I may be the type who manages to grab all the pointless things in life but lets the really important things slip away:* whenever this thought crossed his mind—which was often—his heart would descend to a place devoid of light and warmth.

Whenever, after he had been with a new woman for some months, he began to notice something about her character or behavior, however trivial, that displeased him or touched a nerve, somewhere in a recess of his heart he would feel a twinge of relief. As a result, it became a pattern for him to carry on tepid, indecisive relationships with one woman after another. Each of these relationships dissolved on its own. The breakups never involved any discord or shouting matches, because he never became involved with women who seemed as if they might be difficult to get rid of. Before he knew it, he had developed a kind of nose for convenient partners.

Junpei was unsure whether this ability stemmed from his own innate character or whether it had been formed by his environment. If the latter, it might well have been the fruit of his father's curse. Around the time that he graduated from college, he had a violent argument with his father and cut off all contact with him, but still the "three-women theory," its basis never fully explained, clung tenaciously to him. At one point, he even half-jokingly considered becoming gay: maybe then he'd be able to free himself from this ridiculous countdown. For better or for worse, however, women were the only objects of Junpei's sexual interest.

The next woman Junpei met was older than he was. She was thirty-six. Junpei was thirty-one. An acquaintance of his was opening a little French restaurant on a street leading out of central Tokyo, and Junpei was invited to the party. He wore a Perry Ellis shirt of deep-blue silk, with a matching summer sports jacket. He had planned to meet a close friend at the party, but the friend cancelled at the last minute, which left Junpei with no one to talk to. He nursed a large glass of Bordeaux alone at the bar. Just as he was ready to leave and beginning to scan the crowd for the owner in order to say goodbye, a tall woman approached him holding a purple cocktail. Junpei's first thought on seeing her was: Here is a woman with excellent posture.

"Somebody over there told me that you're a writer. Is that true?" she asked, resting an elbow on the bar.

"I suppose so, in a way," Junpei answered.

"A writer 'in a way'?"

Junpei nodded.

"How many books have you published?"

"Two volumes of short stories and one book I translated. None of them sold much."

She gave him a quick head-to-toe inspection and smiled with apparent satisfaction.

"Well, anyhow, you're the first real writer I've met."

"I might be a little disappointing," Junpei said. "A pianist could play you a tune. A painter could draw something for you. A magician could perform a trick. There's not much a writer can do on the spot."

"Oh, I don't know. Maybe I can just enjoy your artistic aura or something."

"Artistic aura?" Junpei said.

"That special radiance—something you don't find in ordinary people."

"I look at my face in the mirror every morning when I'm shaving, but I've never noticed anything like that."

She smiled and asked, "What kind of stories do you write?"

"People ask me that a lot, but my stories don't really fit into any particular genre."

She ran a finger around the lip of her cocktail glass. "I suppose that means you write *literary* fiction?"

"I suppose it does. You say that the way you might say 'chain letters.'"

She smiled again. "Could I have heard your name?"

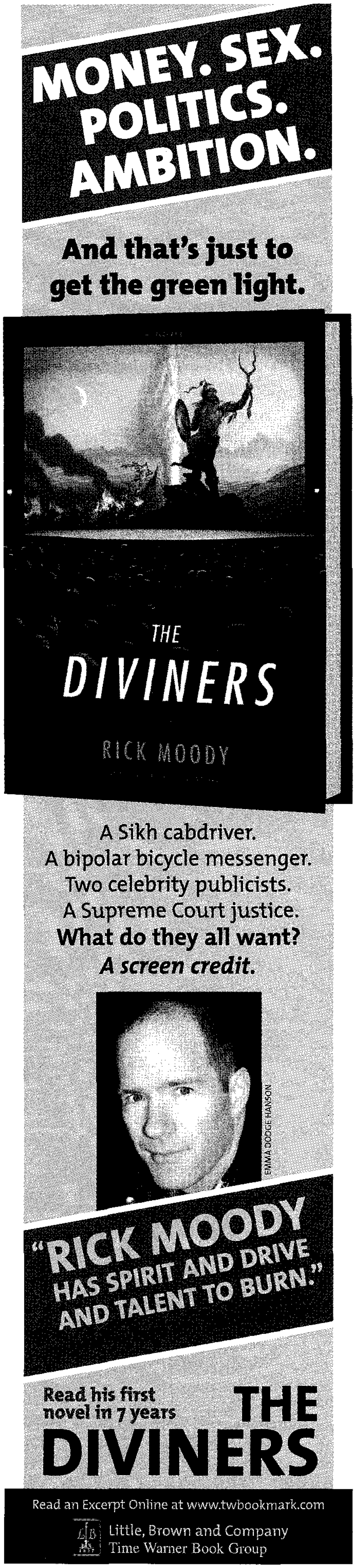
"Do you read literary magazines?"

She gave her head a small, sharp shake.

"Then you probably haven't. I'm not that well known."

Without asking his permission, she sat on the barstool next to his, sipped what was left of her cocktail, and told him her name: Kirie.

Junpei guessed that she was an inch or more taller than he was. She had a deep tan, her hair was short, and her head was a beautiful shape. She wore a pale-green linen jacket, with the sleeves rolled up to her elbows, and a knee-length flared skirt. Under the jacket, she had on a simple cotton blouse with a small turquoise brooch at the collar. The swell of her breasts was neither large nor small. She dressed with style, and while there was nothing affected about it, her entire outfit seemed to express a strong and independent personality. Her lips were full, and they marked the ends of her sentences by spreading or pursing. This gave her a strangely lively quality. Three parallel creases formed across her broad forehead whenever she stopped to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think about something; when she finished thinking, they disappeared.

Junpei was aware that he was attracted to her. Something indefinable but persistent was exciting him, pumping adrenaline to his heart. Suddenly aware that his throat was dry, he ordered a Perrier from a passing waiter, and as always he began to ask himself, Is she someone with real meaning for me? Is she one of the remaining two? Will she be my second strike? Should I let her go, or take a swing?

"Did you always want to be a writer?" Kirie asked.

"Hmm. Let's just say I could never think of anything else I wanted to be."

"So your dream came true."

"I wonder. I wanted to be a *great* writer." Junpei spread his hands about a foot apart. "There's a pretty big distance between the two, I think."

"Everybody has to start somewhere. You have your future ahead of you. You can't attain perfection right away." Then she asked, "How old are you?"

Being older than he was didn't seem to bother her in the least. It didn't bother Junpei, either. He preferred mature women to young girls. In most cases, it was easier to break up with an older woman.

"What kind of work do you do?" he asked.

Her lips formed a perfectly straight line, and her expression became earnest for the first time.

"What kind of work do you *think* I do?"

Junpei jogged his glass, swirling the red wine inside it exactly once. "Can I have a hint?"

"No hints. Is it so hard to tell? Observation and judgment are your business."

"Not really," he said. "What a writer is supposed to do is observe and observe and observe again, and put off making judgments till the last possible moment."

"Of course," she said. "All right, then, observe and observe and observe again, and then use your imagination. That wouldn't clash with your professional ethics, would it?"

Junpei raised his eyes and studied Kirie's face with new concentration, hoping to find a secret sign there. She looked straight into his eyes, and he looked straight into hers.

After a short pause, he said, "All right, this is what I imagine, based on nothing much: You're a professional of some sort. Not just anyone can do your job. It requires some kind of special expertise."

"Bull's-eye! But try to narrow it down a little."

"Something to do with music?"

"No."

"Fashion design?"

"No."

"Tennis?"

"No," she said.

Junpei shook his head. "Well, you've got a tan, you're solidly built, your arms have a good bit of muscle. Maybe you do a lot of outdoor sports. I don't think you're an outdoor laborer. You don't have that vibe."

"It's a narrative I didn't intend."

Kirie rested her arms on the counter and turned them over, inspecting them. "You seem to be getting there."

"But I still can't give you the right answer."

"It's important to keep a few little secrets," Kirie said. "I don't want to deprive you of your professional pleasure—observing and imagining. . . . I will give you one hint, though. It's the same for me as for you."

"The same how?"

"I mean, my profession is exactly what I always wanted to do, ever since I was a little girl. Like you. Getting to where I am, though, was not an easy journey."

"Good," Junpei said. "That's important. Your work should be an act of love, not a marriage of convenience."

"An act of love," Kirie said. The words seemed to make an impression on her. "That's a wonderful metaphor."

"Meanwhile, do you think I might have heard your name somewhere?" Junpei asked.

"Probably not," she answered, shaking her head. "I'm not that well known."

"Oh, well, everybody has to start somewhere."

"Exactly," Kirie said with a smile. Then she turned serious. "My situation is different from yours in one way. I'm expected to attain perfection right from the start. No mistakes allowed. Perfection or nothing. No in-between. No second chances."

"I suppose that's another hint."

"Probably."

A waiter circulating with a tray of champagne approached them. She took two glasses from him and handed one to Junpei.

"Cheers," she said.

"To our respective areas of expertise," Junpei said.

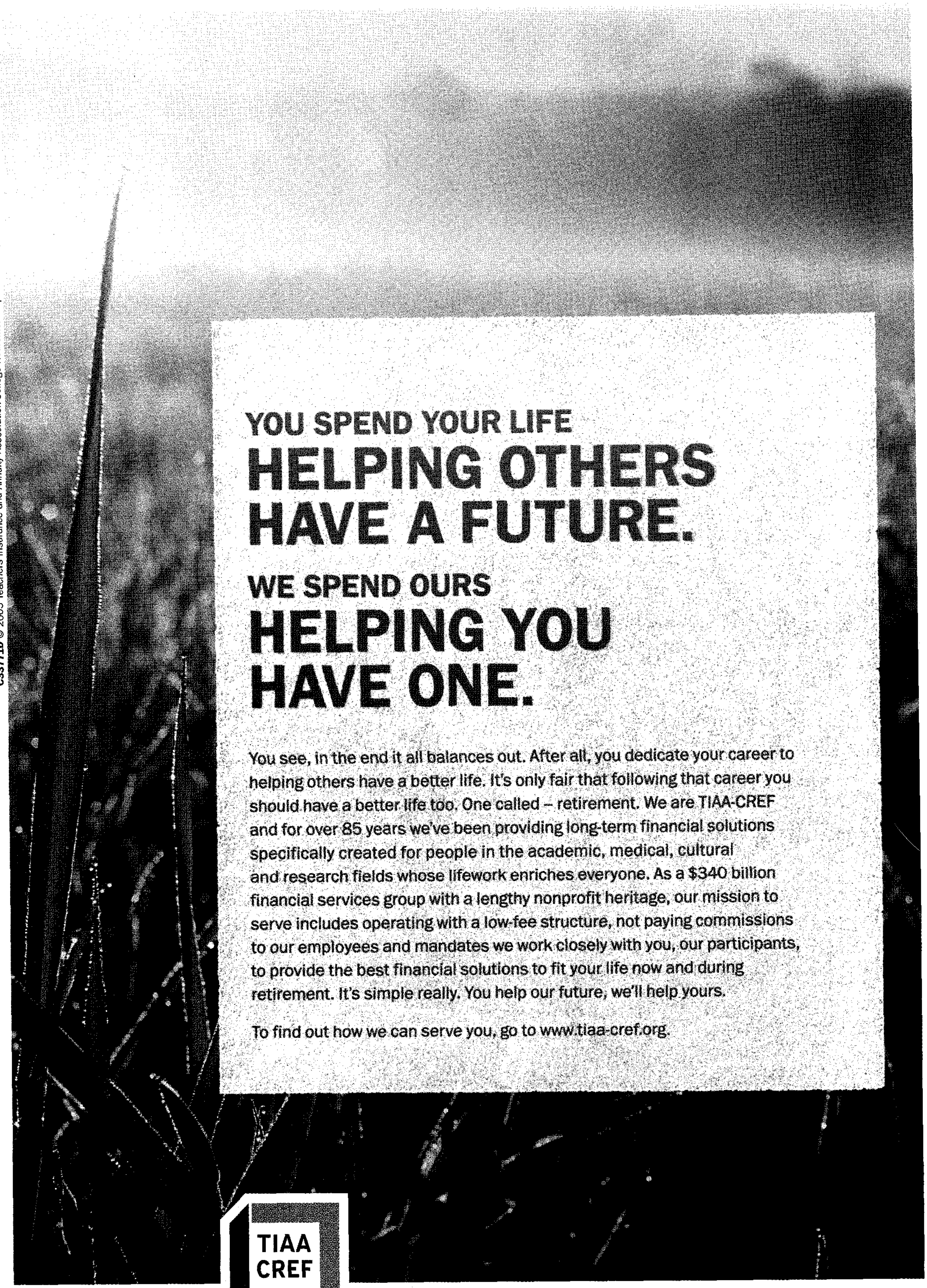
They clinked glasses.

"By the way," she said, "are you married?"

Junpei shook his head.

"Neither am I," Kirie said.

She spent that night in Junpei's room. They drank wine—a gift from the restaurant—had sex, and went to sleep. When Junpei woke at ten o'clock the next morning, she was gone, leaving



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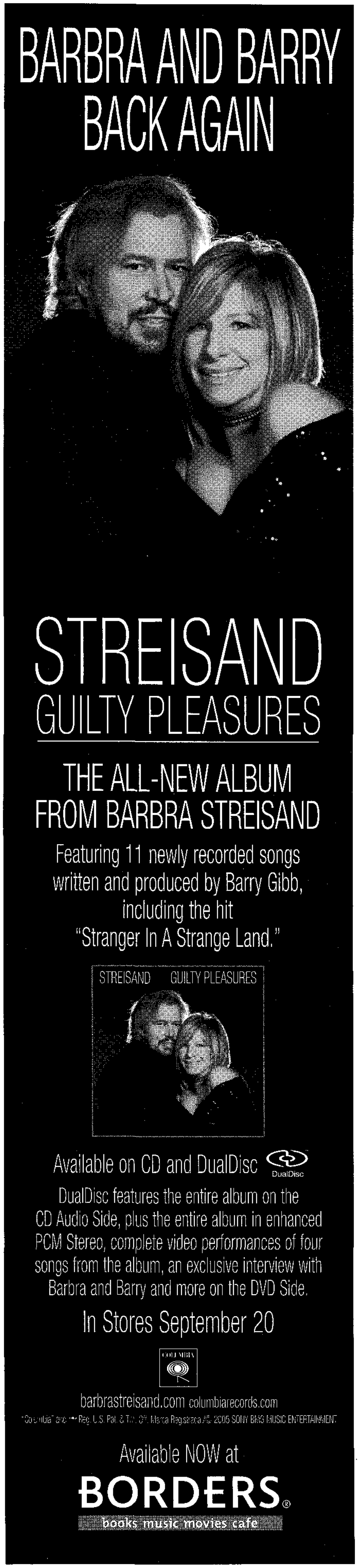

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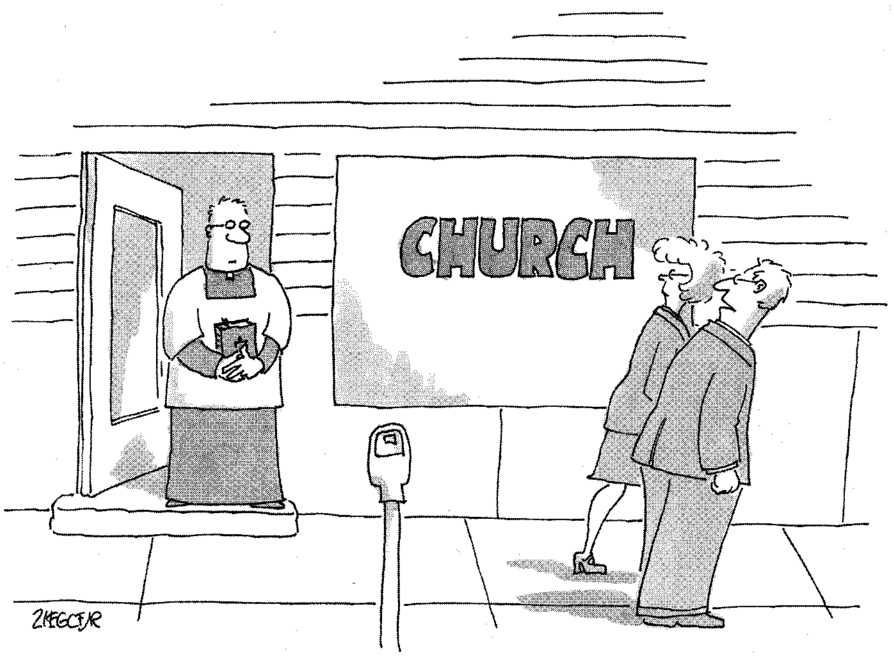

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• •

only an indentation, like a memory, in the pillow next to his and a note: "I have to go to work. Get in touch with me if you like." She included her cell-phone number.

He called her, and they had dinner at a restaurant the following Saturday. They drank a little wine, had sex in Junpei's room, and went to sleep. Again the next morning she was gone. It was Sunday, but her note said again, "Got to go to work."

Junpei still had no idea what kind of work Kirie did, but it certainly started early in the morning. And—on occasion, at least—she worked on Sundays.

The two were never at a loss for things to talk about. She had a sharp mind and was knowledgeable on a broad range of topics. She enjoyed reading, but generally favored books other than fiction—biography, history, psychology, and popular science—and she retained an amazing amount of information. One time, Junpei was astounded at her detailed knowledge of the history of prefabricated housing.

"Prefabricated housing? Your work must have something to do with construction or architecture."

"No," she said. "I just tend to be attracted to highly practical topics. That's all."

She did, however, read the two story collections that Junpei had published, and found them "wonderful." "They were far more enjoyable than I expected," she told him. "To tell you the truth, I was worried. What would I do if I read your work and didn't like it? What could I say? But there was nothing to worry about. I enjoyed them thoroughly."

"I'm glad to hear that," Junpei said, relieved. He had had the same worry when, at her request, he gave her the books.

"I'm not just saying this to make you feel good," Kirie said, "but you've got something special—that special element it takes to become an outstanding writer. Your stories are lively, and the style is beautiful, but mainly it's that *your writing* is so balanced. For me, that is always the most important thing—in music, in fiction, in painting. Whenever I encounter a work or a performance that lacks balance, it makes me sick. It's like motion sickness. That's probably why I don't go to concerts and hardly read any fiction."

"Because you don't want to encounter unbalanced things?"

"Exactly."

"Sounds a little far out to me."

"I'm a Libra. I just can't stand it when things are out of balance. No, it's not so much that I can't stand it as . . ."

She closed her mouth in search of the right words, but she wasn't able to find them, releasing instead a few tentative sighs. "Oh, well, never mind," she went on. "I just wanted to say that I believe someday you are going to write novels. And, when you do that, you will become a more important writer. It may take a while, but that's what I feel."

"No, I'm a born short-story writer," Junpei said dryly. "I'm not suited to writing novels."

He offered nothing more on the subject, just lay quietly and listened to the hum of the air-conditioner. In fact, he had tried several times to write a novel, but had always bogged down partway through. He simply could not maintain the concentration it took to write a story over a long period of time. He would start out convinced that he was going to write something incredible. The story would flow out almost by itself. But, the farther he went with it, the more its energy and brilliance would fade—gradually at first, but undeniably, until, like an engine coming to a halt, it petered out entirely.

The two of them were in bed. It was autumn. They were naked after a long, warm session of lovemaking. Kirie's shoulder pressed against Junpei, whose arms were around her. Two glasses of white wine stood on the night table.

"Junpei?"

"Uh-huh."

"You're in love with another woman, aren't you? Somebody you can't forget?"

"It's true," Junpei admitted. "You can tell?"

"Of course," she said. "Women are very sensitive to such things. You can't see her?"

"There are problems."

"And no possibility those 'problems' could be solved?"

"None," Junpei said with a quick shake of the head.

Kirie drank a little wine. "I don't have anybody like that," she said almost under her breath. "I like you a lot, Junpei. You really move me. When we're together like this, I feel tremendously happy and calm. But that doesn't mean that I want to have a serious relationship with you. How does that make you feel? Relieved?"

Junpei ran his fingers through her hair. Instead of answering her question, he asked one of his own. "Why is that?"

"Why don't I want to be with you?"

"Uh-huh."

"Does it bother you?"

"A little."

"I can't have a serious everyday relationship with anybody. Not just you, anybody," she said. "I want to concentrate completely on what I'm doing now. If I were living with somebody—if I had a deep emotional involvement with somebody—I might not be able to do that."

Junpei thought for a minute. "You mean you don't want to be distracted?"

"That's right."

"If you were distracted, you could lose your balance, and that might prove to be an obstacle to your career."

"Exactly." She nodded.

"But you still won't tell me what that is."

"Guess."

"You're a burglar."

"No," Kirie answered with amusement. "What a sexy guess! But a burglar doesn't go to work early in the morning."

"You're a hit man."

"Hit *person*," she corrected him. "But no. Why are you coming up with these awful ideas?"

"So what you do is perfectly legal?"

"Perfectly."

"Undercover agent?"

"No. O.K., let's stop for today. I'd rather talk about your work. Tell me about what you're writing. You are writing something now?"

"Yes, a short story."

"What kind of story?"

"I haven't finished it yet."

"So tell me what has happened so far."

Junpei fell silent. He had a policy of not talking to anyone about his works in progress. If he put his story into words and those words left his mouth, he feared, something important would evaporate like morning dew. Delicate shades of meaning would be flattened into a shallow surface. Secrets would no longer be secrets. But here in bed, running his fingers through Kirie's short hair, Junpei felt that it might be all right to tell her. After all, he was taking a break from the story because he didn't

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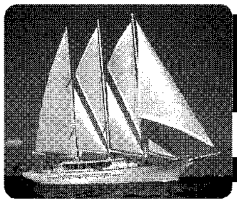

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know how to finish it. He hadn't been able to move forward for some days now.

"It's in the third person, and the protagonist is a woman," he began. "She's in her early thirties, a skilled internist who practices at a big hospital. She's single, but she's having an affair with a surgeon at the same hospital. He's in his late forties and has a wife and kids."

Kirie took a moment to imagine the heroine. "Is she attractive?"

"I think so. Quite attractive," Junpei said. "But not as attractive as you."

Kirie kissed Junpei on the neck. "That's the right answer," she said.

"So, anyway, she takes a vacation and goes off on a trip by herself. It's autumn. She's staying at a little hot-spring resort in the mountains and she goes for a walk along a stream. She's a bird-watcher, and she especially enjoys seeing kingfishers. She steps down into the dry streambed and notices an odd stone. It's black with a tinge of red, it's smooth, and it has a familiar shape. She realizes right away that it's shaped like a kidney. I mean, she's a doctor, after all. Everything about it is just like a real kidney—the size, the thickness."

"So she picks it up and takes it home."

"Right," Junpei said. "She takes it to her office at the hospital and uses it as a paperweight. It's just the right size and weight."

"And it's the perfect shape for a hospital."

"Exactly," Junpei said. "But a few days later she notices something strange."

Kirie waited silently for him to continue with his story. Junpei paused as if deliberately teasing his listener, but in fact this was not deliberate at all. He had not yet written the rest of the story. This was the point at which he had stopped. Standing at this unmarked intersection, he surveyed his surroundings and worked his brain. Then he thought of how the story should go.

"Every morning, she finds the stone in a different place. She's a very methodical person, so she always leaves it in exactly the same spot on her desk when she goes home at night, but in the morning she finds it on the seat of her swivel chair, or next to the vase, or on the floor. Her first thought is that her memory is playing tricks on her. The door to her office is locked, and no one else can get in. Of course, the night watchman has a key, but he has been working at the hospital for years and he would never take it upon himself to enter anyone's office. Besides, what would be the point of his barging into her office every night just to change the position of a stone she's using as a paperweight? Nothing else in the office has changed, nothing is missing, and nothing has been tampered with. The position of the rock is the only thing that changes. She's totally stumped. What do *you* think is going on? Why do you think the stone moves during the night?"

"The kidney-shaped stone has its own reasons for doing what it does," Kirie said with simple assurance.

"What kind of reasons can a kidney-shaped stone have?"

"It wants to shake her up. Little by little. Over a long period of time."

"All right, then, why does it want to shake her up?"

"I don't know," she said. Then, with a giggle, she added, "Maybe it just wants to *rock* her world."

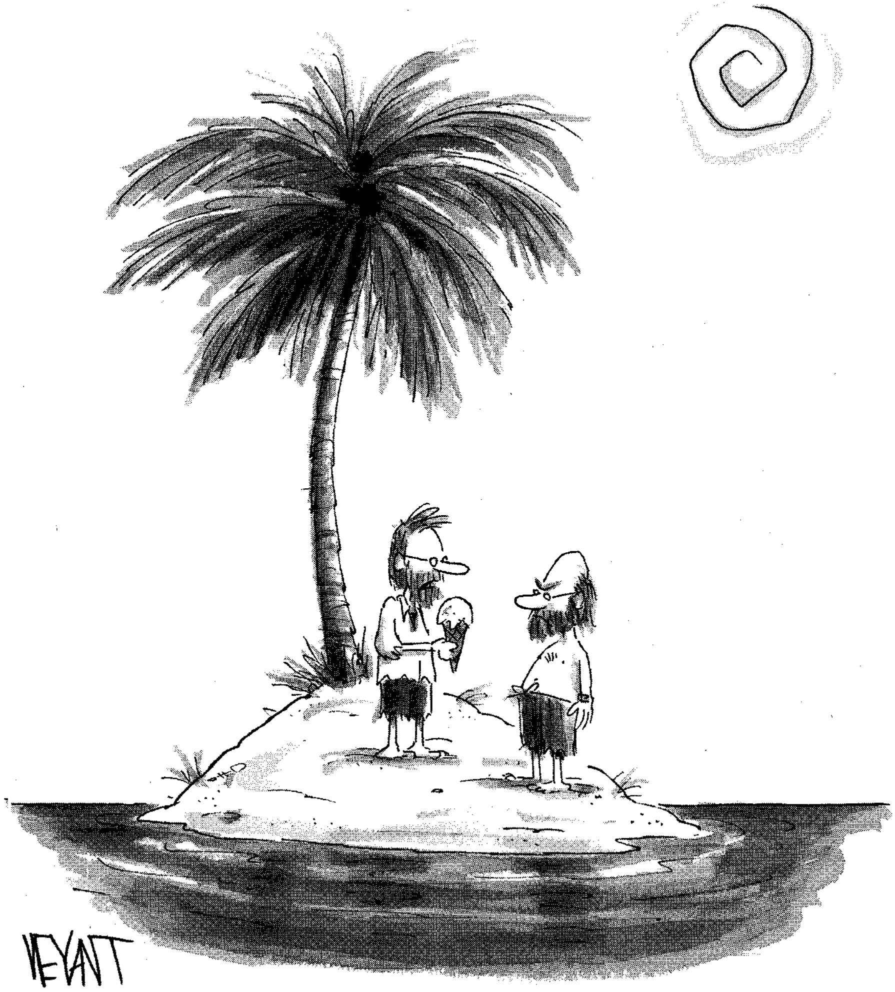
"That's the worst pun I've ever heard," Junpei groaned.

"Well, *you're* the writer. Aren't you the one who decides?"

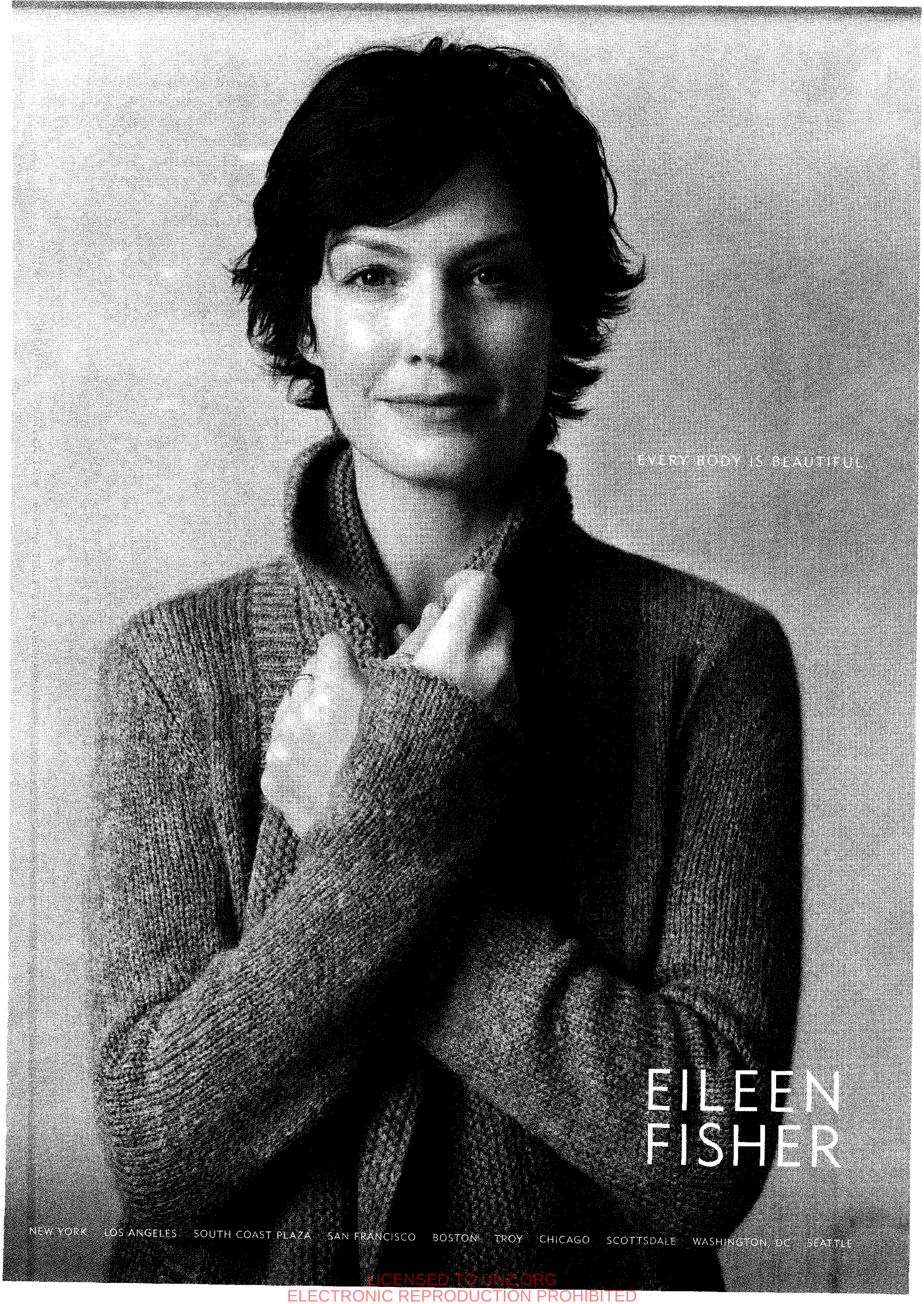
Junpei scowled. He felt a slight throbbing behind his temples from having concentrated so hard. Maybe he had drunk too much wine. "The ideas aren't coming together," he said. "My plots don't move unless I'm actually sitting at my desk and moving my hands, making sentences. Talking about it like this, though, I'm beginning to feel as if the rest of the story is going to work itself out."

"I'll wait," Kirie said. She reached over for her glass and took a sip of wine. "But the story is really getting interesting. I want to know what happens with the kidney-shaped stone."

She turned toward him and pressed her shapely breasts against his side. Then, quietly, as if sharing a secret, she said, "You know, Junpei, everything in the world has its reasons for doing what



"Why? Did you want one?"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“Waving the hat keeps the cattle moving and lets my hair get some highlights.”

it does.” Junpei was falling asleep and could not answer. In the night air, her sentences lost their shape as grammatical constructions and blended with the faint aroma of the wine before reaching the hidden recesses of his consciousness. “For example, the wind has its reasons. You just don’t notice it as you go about your life. Then, at some point, you are made to notice. The wind envelops you with a certain purpose in mind and shakes you up. It knows everything that’s inside you. And it’s not just the wind. Everything, even a stone, knows you. And all you can do is go with those things. As you take them in, you survive and deepen.”

For the next five days, Junpei hardly left the house; he stayed at his desk, writing the rest of the story of the kidney-shaped stone. As Kirie had predicted, the stone continues quietly to shake the doctor—little by little, but decisively. She is engaged in a hurried coupling with her lover in an anonymous hotel room one evening when she stealthily reaches around to his back and feels for the shape of a kidney. Something tells her that her kidney-shaped stone is lurking in there. The kidney is a secret informer that she herself has buried in her lover’s body. Beneath her fingers it squirms like an insect, sending her messages. She converses with the kidney, exchanging intelligence. She can feel its sliminess against the palm of her hand.

The doctor grows gradually used to the existence of the kidney-shaped stone that shifts position every night. She comes to accept it as natural. She is no longer surprised when she finds that it has moved. When she arrives at the hospital each morning, she looks for the stone, picks it up, and returns it to her desk. This has simply become part of her routine. As long as she remains in the room, the stone does not move. It stays quietly in one place, like a cat napping in the sun. It awakes and begins to move only after she has left the room and locked the door.

Whenever she has a spare moment at her desk, she reaches out and caresses the stone’s smooth dark surface. After a while, it becomes increasingly difficult for her to take her eyes off the stone; it is as if she has been hypnotized. She gradually loses interest in anything else. She can no longer read books. She stops going to the gym. Talking to her colleagues bores her. She becomes indifferent to her own grooming. She loses her appetite. Even the embrace of her lover becomes a source of annoyance. When there is no one else around, she speaks to the stone in a lowered voice—the way lonely people converse with a dog or a cat—and she listens to the wordless words the stone speaks to her. The dark kidney-shaped stone now controls the greater part of her life.

Surely the stone is not an object that has come to her from without: Junpei becomes aware of this as his story progresses. The main point is something inside herself. Something inside herself is activating the kidney-shaped stone and urging her to take some kind of action. It keeps sending her signals for that purpose—signals in the form of the stone’s nightly movements.

While he writes, Junpei thinks about Kirie. He senses that she (or something inside her) is propelling the story; it was never his intention to write something so divorced from reality. What Junpei had imagined vaguely beforehand was a more tranquil, psychological story line. In that story line, rocks did not take it upon themselves to move around.

Junpei imagined that the doctor would cut her ties to the married surgeon. She might even come to hate him. This was probably what she had been seeking all along, unconsciously.

Once the rest of the story had become visible to him, writing it out was relatively easy. Listening to the songs of Mahler at low volume, Junpei sat at his computer and wrote the conclusion at what was, for him, top speed.

The doctor makes her decision to part with her lover. “I can’t see you anymore,” she tells him. “Can’t we at least talk this over?” he asks. “No,” she tells him firmly, “that is impossible.” On her next free day, she boards a Tokyo Harbor ferry, and from the deck she throws the kidney-shaped stone into the sea. The stone sinks down to the bottom of the ocean, plunging toward the core of the earth. She resolves to start her life over. Having cast away the stone, she feels a new sense of lightness.

The next day, however, when she arrives at the hospital, the stone is on her desk, waiting for her. It sits exactly where it is supposed to be, as dark and kidney-shaped as ever.

As soon as he finished writing the story, Junpei called Kirie. She would probably want to read the finished work, which she, in a sense, had

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inspired him to write. His call, however, did not go through. "Your call cannot be completed as dialled," a recorded voice said. "Please check the number and try again." Junpei tried it again—and again. But the result was always the same. She was probably having some kind of technical problem with her phone, he thought.

Junpei stuck close to home, waiting for word from Kirie, but nothing came. A month went by. One month became two, and two became three. The season changed to winter, and a new year began. His story came out in the February issue of a literary magazine. A newspaper ad for the magazine listed Junpei's name and the title, "The Kidney-Shaped Stone That Moves Every Day." Kirie might see the ad, buy the magazine, read the story, and call him to share her impressions—or so he hoped. But all that reached him were new layers of silence.

The pain that Junpei felt when Kirie vanished from his life was far more intense than he could have imagined. In the course of a day he would think any number of times, If only she were here! He missed her smile, he missed the words shaped by her lips, he missed the touch of her skin as they held each other. He gained no comfort from his favorite music or from the arrival of new books by authors that he liked. Everything felt distant, divorced from him. Kirie may have been woman No. 2, Junpei thought.

Junpei's next encounter with Kirie occurred one day in early spring—though you couldn't really call it an encounter.

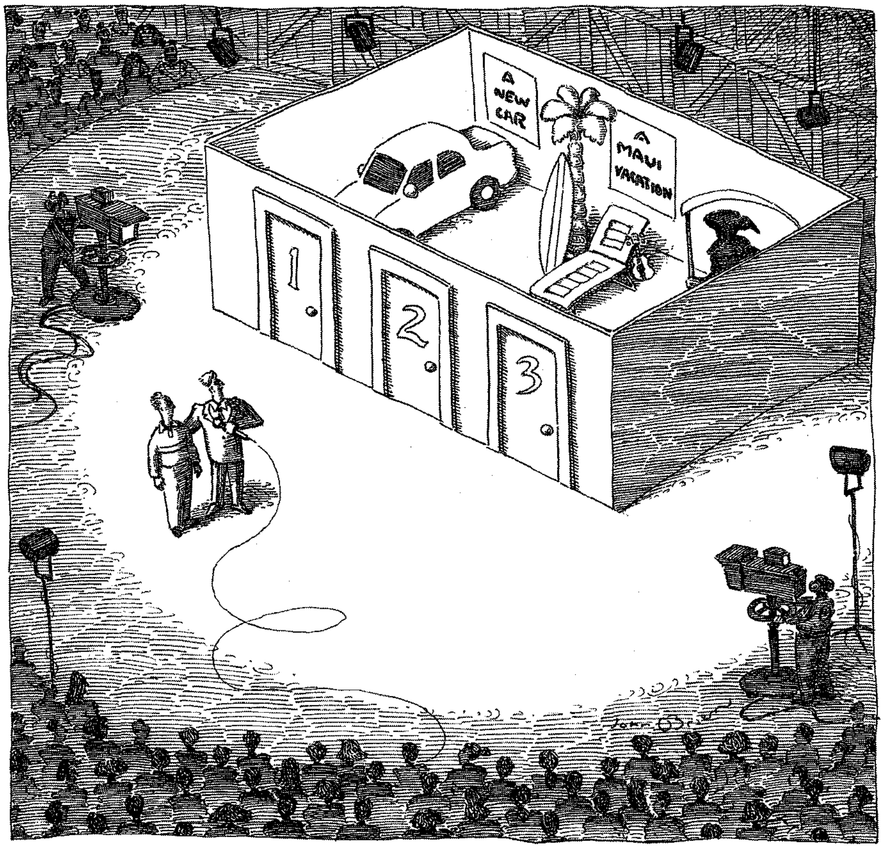
He was in a taxi stuck in traffic. The driver was listening to an FM broadcast. Kirie's voice emerged from the radio. At first, Junpei didn't realize that he was hearing Kirie. He simply thought the voice was similar to hers. But the more he listened the more it sounded like her, her manner of speaking—the same smooth intonation, the same relaxed style, the special way she had of pausing between thoughts.

Junpei asked the driver to turn up the volume.

"Sure thing," the driver said.

Kirie was being interviewed by a female announcer. "So you've liked high places since you were a little girl?" the announcer asked.

"Yes," Kirie—or a woman with ex-



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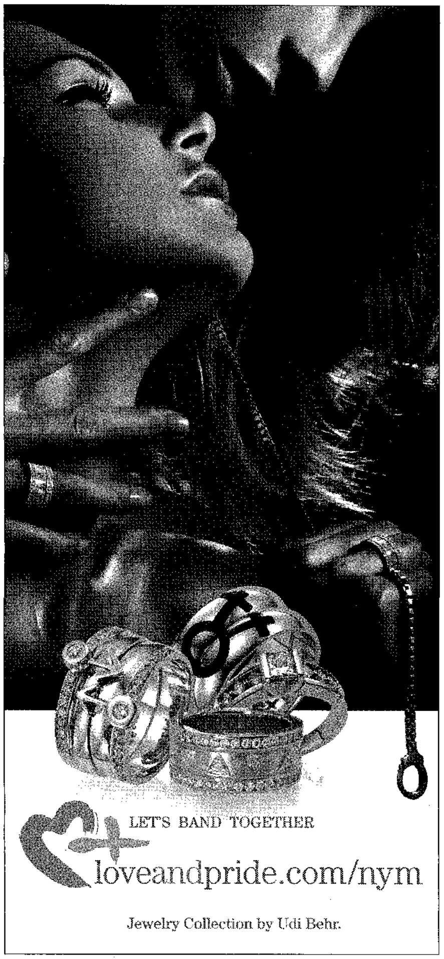

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actly the same voice—said. "As long as I can remember, I've liked being up high. The higher I am, the more peaceful I feel. I was always nagging my parents to take me to tall buildings. I was a strange little creature," she said with a laugh.

"Which is how you got started in your present line of work, I suppose."

"First I worked as an analyst at a securities firm. But I knew right away that it wasn't right for me. I left the company after three years, and the first thing I did was get a job washing windows in tall buildings. What I really wanted to be was a steeplejack, but that's such a macho world—they don't let women in very easily."

"From securities analyst to window-washer—that's quite a change!"

"To tell the truth, washing windows was much less stressful for me. If something's going to fall, it's just me, not stock prices." Again the laugh.

"Now, by 'window-washer' you mean one of those people who get lowered down the side of a building on a platform?"

"Right. Of course, they give you a lifeline, but some spots you can't reach without taking the lifeline off. That didn't bother me at all. No matter how high we went, I was never scared—which made me a very valuable worker."

"I suppose you like to go mountain-climbing?"

"I have almost no interest in mountains. I've tried climbing a few times, but it does nothing for me. The only things that interest me are man-made structures that rise straight up from the ground. Don't ask me why."

"So now you run a window-washing company that specializes in high-rise buildings in the Tokyo metropolitan area."

"Correct," she said. "I saved up and started my own little company about six years ago. Of course, I go out with my crews, but basically I'm an owner now. I don't have to take orders from anybody, and I can make up my own rules."

"Meaning you can take the lifeline off whenever you like?"

"In a word." Another laugh.

"You really do like high places, don't you?"

"I do. I feel it's my calling to be up high. I can't imagine doing any other kind of work. Your work should be an act of love, not a marriage of convenience."

"It's time for a song now," the announcer said. "James Taylor, with 'Up on the Roof.' We'll talk more about tightrope-walking after this."

While the song played, Junpei leaned over the front seat and asked the driver, "What does this woman do?"

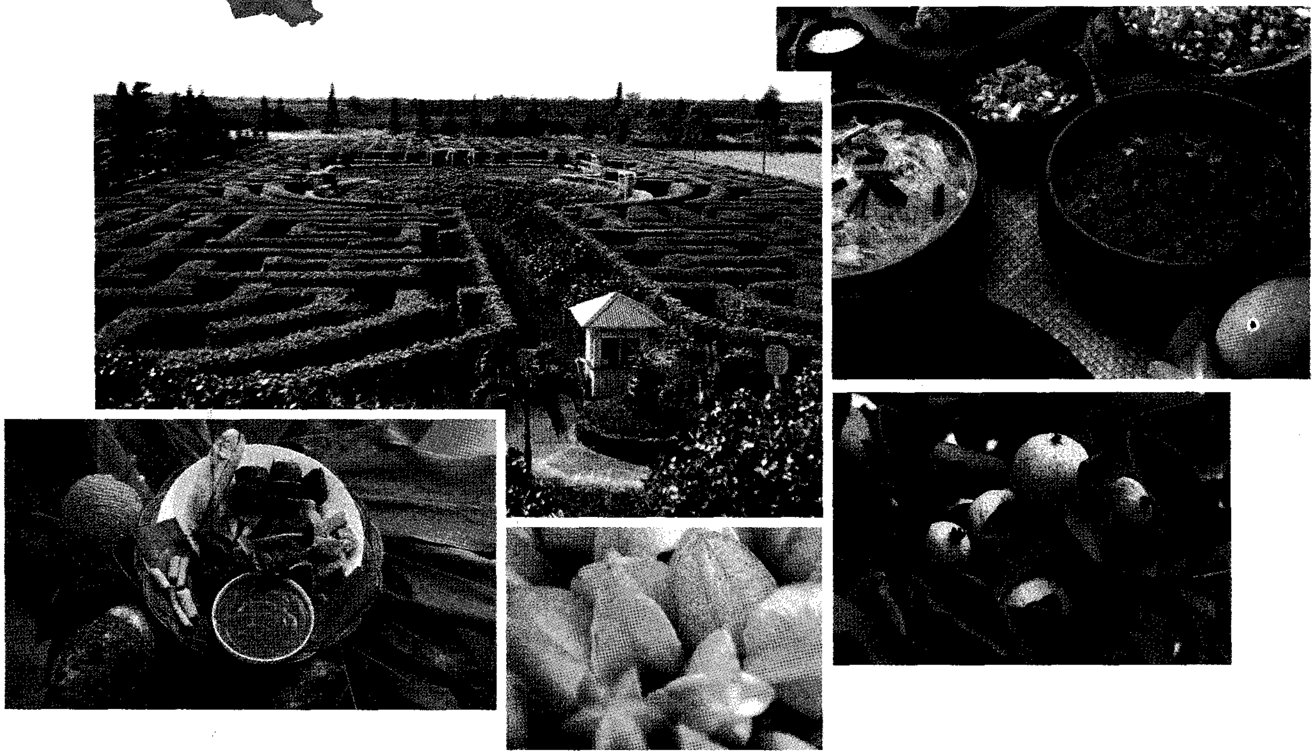
"She puts up ropes between high-rise buildings and walks across them," the driver explained. "With a long pole in her hands for balance. She's some kind of performer. I guess she gets her kicks that way. *I* get scared just riding in a glass elevator."

"That's her *profession*?" Junpei asked. He noticed that his voice was dry and the weight had gone out of it. It sounded like someone else's voice.

"Yeah. I guess she gets a bunch of sponsors together and puts on a performance. She just did one at some famous cathedral in Germany. She says she wants to do it on higher buildings but can't get permission. 'Cause if you go that high a safety net won't help. Of course, she can't make a living that way, so—well, you heard her say she's got this window-cleaning company. Weird chick."

"The most wonderful thing about it is that when you're up there you change as a human being," Kirie told the interviewer. "You have to change or you can't survive. When I come out to a high place, it's just me and the wind. Nothing else. The wind envelops me, shakes me up. It understands who I am. At the same time, I understand the wind. We accept each other and we decide to go on living together. That's the moment I love more than anything. No, I'm not afraid. Once I set foot in that high place and enter completely into that state of concentration, all fear vanishes."

She spoke with cool assurance. Junpei could not tell whether the interviewer understood what she was saying. When the interview ended, Junpei stopped the cab and got out, walking the rest of the way to his destination. Now and then he would look up at a tall building and at the clouds flowing past. No one could come between her and the



O‘ahu, Crossroads of Cuisine

Once island chefs began searing ahi and winning James Beard Foundation Awards, people stopped joking that the meal you eat on the plane ride over is better than any you'll find in O‘ahu. These days the island offers the chance to dine with elegance on white tablecloths one night and rub elbows with the locals the next.

Coriander-crusted *onaga* at **Chef Mavro** (808-944-4714), one of the city's most romantic restaurants, and *nori*-wrapped ahi at **Alan Wong's** (808-949-2526), are typical dishes of the now famous Hawai‘i Regional Cuisine. But scrape away the miso *beurre blanc* and passion fruit reductions and you'll expose the cuisine's humble roots: plantation food.

Hawai‘i's sugarcane plantations gave the state the country's most ethnically diverse population—and a culinary smorgasbord. Start at **Imanas** (808-941-2626), a Japanese tapas bar, where the largely Japanese crowd washes down miso butterfish and spicy seaweed salad with pickled plum sours. **The Green Door** (808-533-0606) serves spicy Malaysian-Singaporean cuisine at its four tiny tables. The heartburn-immune scarf kimchi pancakes and crispy fish fritters well past midnight at the twenty-four-hour Korean restaurant **Sorabol** (808-947-3113). If you can brave the line ("Be cool…no get mad," advises the outside sign) the salty, smoky, shredded *kalua* pork and juicy *laulau* (chicken or pork wrapped in ti leaf) at **Ono Hawaiian Foods** (808-737-2275) is a near-lu‘au, without the hula.

The marriage of these different foods has created its own cuisine, one so well blended that islanders simply call it "local." *Poke*—a raw, cubed ahi tossed with seaweed—is fresh and flavorful at **Yama's Fish Market** (808-941-9994). Heaps of fresh minced ginger, chopped green onions, and cilantro spice up the oxtail soup at Kam Bowl's **Kapiolani** coffee shop (808-845-3687), where the sound of clattering tenpins accompanies the serving of steaming bowls of soup.

A cool refreshing shave ice, piled atop vanilla ice cream and sweetened adzuki beans at **Waiola Shave Ice Store** (808-949-2269) makes a perfect dessert for any of these meals. But if you want to see the evolution from plantation food to five-star fare right before your eyes, try this: get in line at **Leonard's Bakery** (808-737-5591) for a hot, crispy *malasada,* a beignet-like donut contributed by the Portuguese. Then hop back to Chef Mavro—where you'll find the little gems stuffed with pineapple-coconut ice cream and drizzled with guava coulis. If imitation is flattery, theft is tribute.

PHOTOS © CORBIS

For more information on planning your trip to O‘ahu, call 877-525-OAHU or log on to visit-oahu.com.

The Capital of Caribbean Golf

Amid the Dominican Republic's miles of lush inland valleys and pristine white beaches lie other irresistible attractions: twenty-one golf courses designed by such titans as Pete Dye, Dye's son P.B., Jack Nicklaus, Arnold Palmer, and Robert Trent Jones. Five new courses will also open next year, with another five in the works.

Leading the pack is Pete Dye's **Teeth of the Dog**, or *Dientes del Perro*, named for the jagged coral on which the course was built. The crown jewel of Casa de Campo's three tracts, it's consistently ranked the Caribbean's best, and among the world's top fifty. Recently refurbished, its incisors have been polished for a mid-October reopening. **Dye's Links**, meanwhile, evokes traditional English and Scottish greens. The resort's latest course, the **Dye Fore** opened in 2003. With its views of the Chavon River below, it's exceptionally playable. The setting for these gems: a resort whose villas and cobblestone streets feel like a medieval Tuscan village.

P.B. Dye's **La Cana at Punta Cana Resort & Club**, a vacation destination whose owners/developers include Julio Iglesias and Dominican native Oscar de la Renta, has fourteen holes overlooking the Caribbean and four holes that run parallel to the sea's edge. Its 18th hole echoes Pebble Beach's. Dye is also designing yet another course here, the **Hacienda**.

Jack Nicklaus is the creative force behind the ambitious new development, **Cap Cana**. Nicklaus is designing all of its three signature greens, the first of which, **Punta Espada**, is scheduled to open next March with eight holes along the water, and a design that flows into the area's bluffs, beaches, and waterways. Cap Cana will have the first-ever, Nicklaus-designed luxury condominium, Golden Bear Village.

Golf great Arnold Palmer designed the **Ocean Signature Golf Course** opening next year at the St. Tropez-influenced Atlantica on Luperon Bay, an ambitious multiuse resort still in the early stages of a ten-year, billion-dollar development plan. It's the first of three golf courses that travel along limestone cliffs and coral canyons onto multiple oceanfront fairways. Its second course is being designed by Jim Fazio.

Then there are classics like **Playa Grande**, among the last courses designed by the legendary Robert Trent Jones. Sometimes dubbed the "Pebble Beach of the Caribbean," there are cliff vistas—ten in fact, compared with Pebble Beach's six. But perhaps the best way to judge a destination is by the company it keeps. Using that measure, Dominican golf gets high ratings, attracting such arbiters of golf and taste as Pete Dye himself, who has a home at Casa de Campo; former presidents Bill Clinton and George H. W. Bush have played on the Dye Fore Course; ballet and modern dance great Mikhail Baryshnikov has a residence at Punta Cana.

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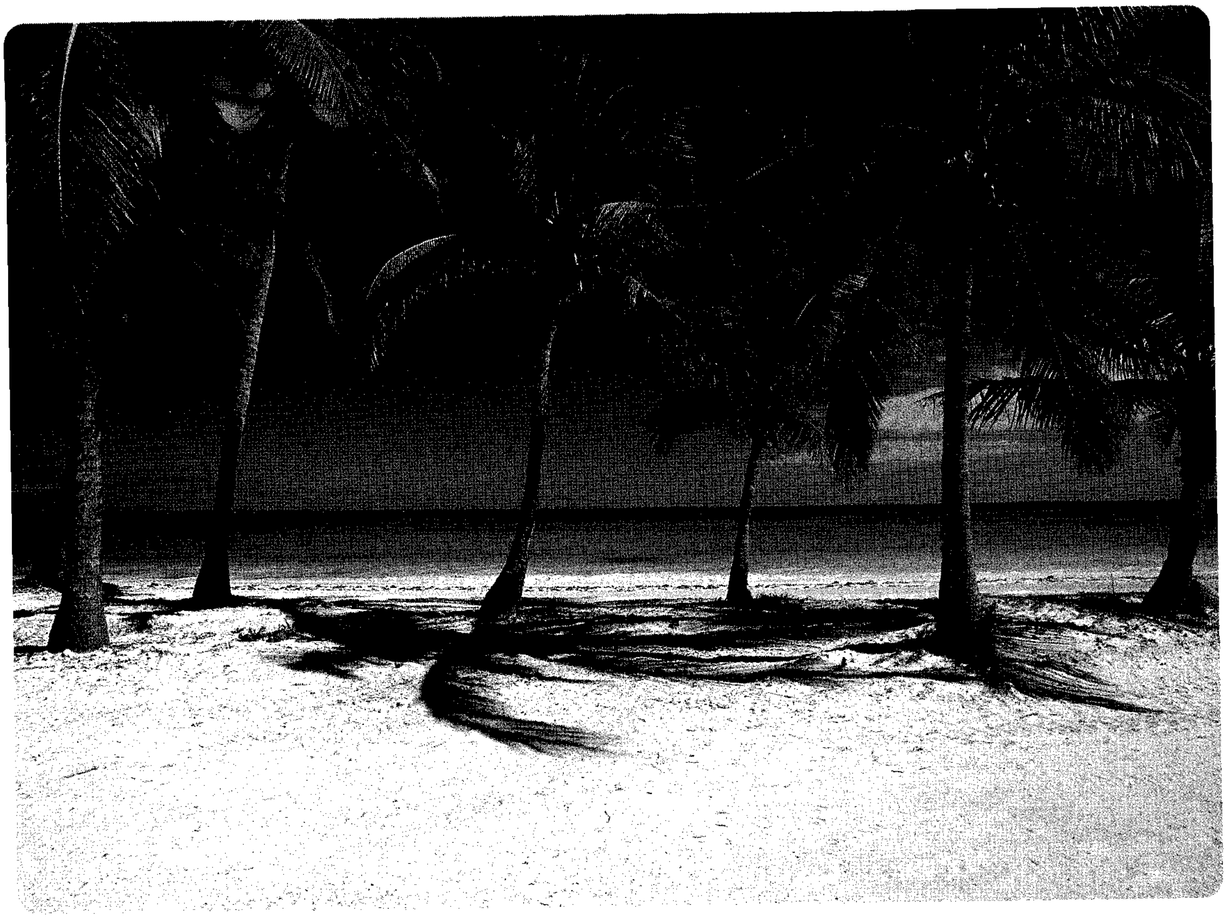

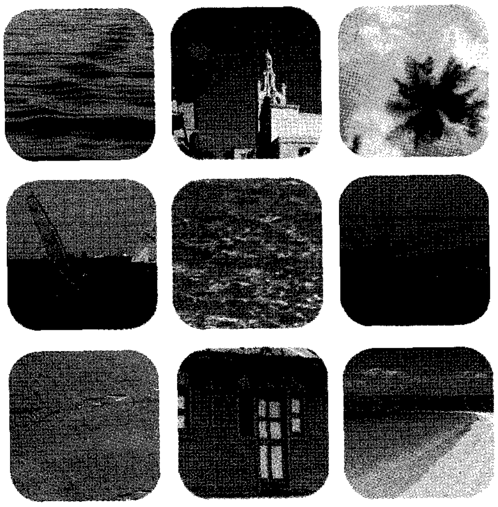

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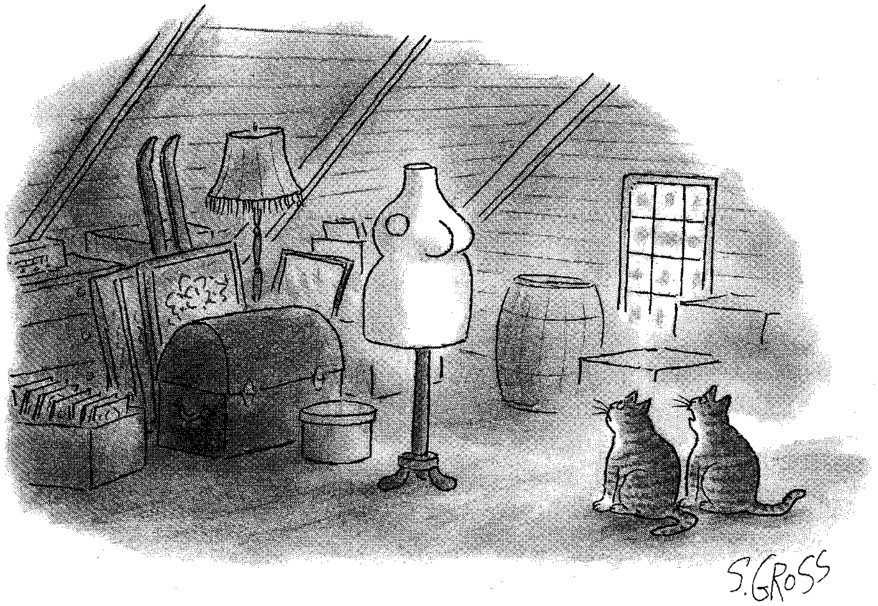

"Look what they did to her! We should be thankful they only had us spayed."

• •

wind, he realized, and he felt a violent rush of jealousy. But jealousy of what? The wind? Who could possibly be jealous of the wind?

Junpei waited several more months for Kirie to contact him. He wanted to see her and talk to her about lots of things, including the kidney-shaped stone. But the call never came, and his calls to her could never be completed as dialled. When summer came, he gave up. She obviously had no intention of seeing him again. And so the relationship ended calmly, without discord or shouting matches—exactly the way he had ended relationships with so many other women. At some point, the calls would stop coming, and everything would come to an end quietly, naturally.

Should I add her to the countdown? Was she one of my three women with real meaning? Junpei agonized over the question for some time without reaching a conclusion. I'll wait another six months, he thought. Then I'll decide.

During those six months, he wrote with great concentration and produced a large number of short stories. As he sat at his desk polishing a story, he would think, Kirie is probably in some high place with the wind right now. Here I am, all alone at my desk writing stories, while she's all alone up there, without a lifeline. Once she enters that state of concentration, all fear vanishes: it's just her and the wind. Junpei would often recall her words and realize that he had come to feel something special for Kirie, something that he had never felt for another woman. It was a deep emotion, with clear outlines and real weight. He was still unsure what to call this emotion. It was, at least, a feeling that could not be exchanged for anything else. Even if he never saw Kirie again, this feeling would stay with him forever. Somewhere in his body—perhaps in the marrow of his bones—he would continue to feel her absence.

As the year came to an end, Junpei made up his mind. He would count her as No. 2. She was one of the women who had real meaning for him. Strike two. Only one left.

But he was no longer afraid. Numbers aren't the important thing, he told himself. The countdown has no meaning. Now he knew: what matters is deciding in your heart to accept another person completely. When you do that, it is always the first time and the last.

One morning, the doctor notices that the dark kidney-shaped stone has disappeared from her desk. And she knows: it won't be coming back. ♦

(*Translated, from the Japanese, by Jay Rubin.*)

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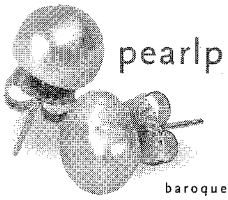
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PROFILES

THE KINGDOM

In the court of Valentino.

BY MICHAEL SPECTER

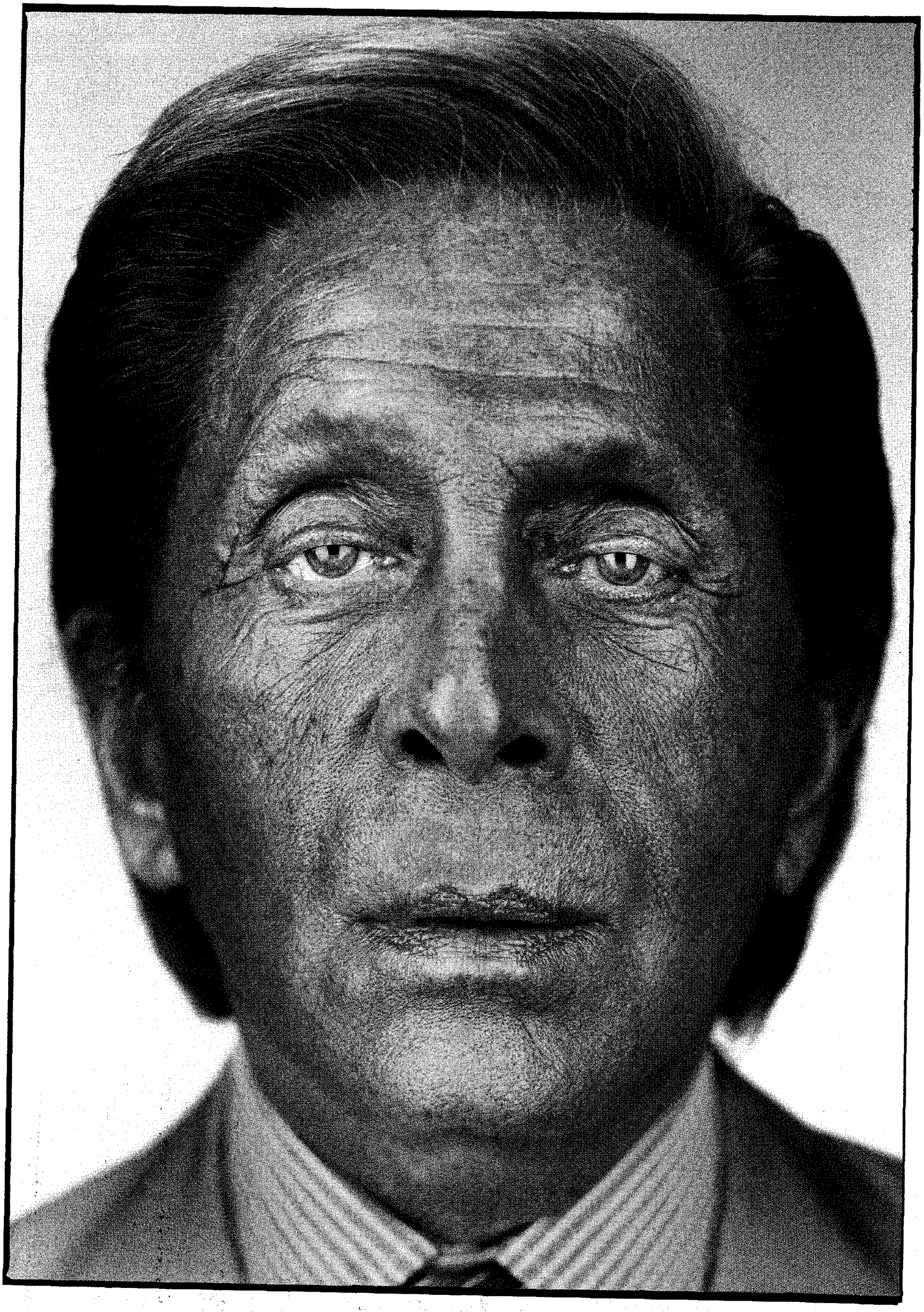
June has never been an easy month for Valentino, the seventy-three-year-old Roman designer. But this spring was more frantic than usual. He introduced a new fragrance—V—and celebrated in New York at the end of May with a party that began at Bergdorf Goodman, continued at the Four Seasons, and ended, close to dawn, at Bungalow 8. Two days later, he was back in Rome before travelling to Milan—a city he detests—for his men's-fashion show, which was entitled "Memory of Capri" and featured models in Lycra shorts acting out reveries from his youth. After that, he returned to his villa on the Via Appia Antica for a day of rest with his six pugs—Margot, Maude, Monty, Molly, Milton, and Maggie—and then dragged himself back to Milan, where, on July 1st, the Valentino Fashion Group was listed on Italy's stock exchange. With that, Valentino became the first of his country's famous designers—before Prada, Versace, or even Armani—to see his name quoted on the bourse. Dressed formally in a dark-blue suit, white shirt, and gray silk tie, he stood at the opening bell surrounded by mannequins draped in the red dresses that have become his signature. Within half an hour, the company's stock price had risen by eight per cent. Half an hour after that, Valentino was on a plane to Paris, where he spent the weekend making final adjustments to the forty haute-couture outfits he would put on the runway at the Théâtre National de Chaillot the following week. (Haute couture remains Valentino's consuming passion, and there were still thousands of dollars' worth of jet pendants to attach, as well as scores of silk flowers to examine.)

Valentino Garavani (the surname is hinted at by the monograms on his shirts and the matchbooks on his yacht) has been working this way for nearly fifty years, since 1960, when he returned to Italy from Paris, where he had studied at the Chambre Syndicale de la Couture Parisienne and served his apprenticeship. "Why I ever thought I could go out on my own like that, God only knows," Valentino recalled recently. "But my parents gave me a little money and I started. I had no idea what I was getting into. Sometimes ignorance is a wonderful thing." Rome was in the final stretch of its postwar glory years. Fellini had just shot "La Dolce Vita," a film that could have served as an early documentary about Valentino's life. Anita Ekberg, Elizabeth Taylor (who was preparing to embark on "Cleopatra"), and Sophia Loren were all on the Via Veneto that year. Valentino opened an office on Via Condotti, then moved to an eighteenth-century palazzo fifty yards from the Spanish Steps, and he has been there ever since. Rome soon began to fade as a fashion center, and designers, seeing that the future was in factory-made clothes, moved to Milan, the industrial city. Valentino never considered leaving. Neither did his employees, many of whom have been with him for decades; some of his seamstresses remember the first dresses he turned out. These days, their daughters are pursuing more remunerative careers. The generation of designers Valentino grew up with—Yves Saint Laurent, Christian Dior, even Coco Chanel—long ago passed their ateliers on to successors. Only Valentino remains. "There is the Pope, and there is Valentino," Walter Veltroni, the mayor of Rome, told me. "In this city, I don't know who else is as famous."

Few people have devoted more energy to the pursuit of luxury than Valentino. His homes are nearly as famous as anything he makes. There is a villa in Rome, tucked into arbors that line the route Caesar took to the imperial city; Wideville, an estate not far from Paris with a château surrounded by a moat and flanked by low houses, some of the most lavish gardens in Europe, and its own parish church; Chalet Gifferhorn in Gstaad, a ski lodge, where Valentino likes to spend Christmas; an apartment near the Frick museum, overlooking Central Park; and one of the largest private houses in London's Holland Park, which he bought four years ago and has restored to its original nineteenth-century state (and then some). There is also the T. M. Blue One, a hundred-and-fifty-two-foot yacht with four flat-screen televisions, a full-time staff of eleven, and a selection of art ranging from Picassos to two of the four prints that Andy Warhol made, in 1974, of the designer himself. The first time we talked, Valentino was sitting on the aft deck of the yacht, about to set off into the Mediterranean. He is a short, powerfully built man with hair so tightly coiffed that from a distance it appears to have been baked in a kiln; he was shirtless, with patterned blue-and-white silk pants, and on his wrist he wore a new supersized Cartier Santos watch with a striking orange band made of alligator that went nicely with his tan. Valentino spends a lot of time in the sun. His skin, the color of melted caramel, has the texture of a lovingly preserved Etruscan ruin.

It is hard to have a conversation about Valentino, or with him, that does not eventually turn to the issue of retirement. He and Giancarlo Giammetti, his lifelong business partner and alter ego, sold the company in 1998, but they remain the central figures in the house, and recently, after having been sold again, the brand has experienced something of a renaissance. Sales have surged, and the number of new bou-

Few have devoted more energy to the pursuit of luxury than Valentino. Photograph by Martin Schoeller.



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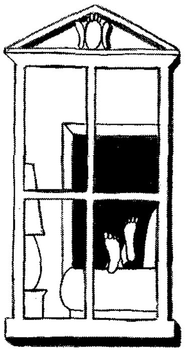
tiques is growing. Rumors persist, though, and they are never fully denied either by Valentino or by the company that now owns the house. "We don't talk about these things with him," Michele Norsa, Valentino's chief executive officer, told me when we met in Rome not long ago. "He is a man of a certain age, and this is difficult to address. He will go when he is ready."



"What would I do if I didn't do this?" Valentino said when I asked him about retirement. "I can't just suddenly do nothing. I am tired, though. Eight collections a year, the launches and appearances, drawings and meetings. I cannot let up for a second. You get up in the morning, you are in Rome. Then Milan. Then Paris. It's all details and deadlines: there are the dresses and fabrics and shoes and fragrances." Lowering his voice, he said, "There is also my life. On Monday and Tuesday, I will simply have to steal two days from my work. I have no choice. They called me from Wideville. What has happened at Wideville is hard to believe." I had no idea what he was talking about. "There has been an explosion of roses," he said. "There are thousands. Hundreds of thousands. You cannot imagine it. . . . I must go. It is not convenient. Perhaps it is not right. But this garden must be seen now. There are many things you have to do in life, but you cannot ignore the roses. When they demand to be seen, one simply has no choice but to go to them."

Valentino produces hundreds of drawings each year, his company manufactures a remarkable amount of clothing, and if he could he would stitch every dress himself. But he is also a man who has fully embraced the concept of quitting time. "I don't think you have to suffer and weep to make a dress," he told me one day in his studio in Rome, while he was fitting a black chiffon gown on a model for his Paris show. "I do my work, but when I am done I am done." No one who knows Valentino well would question for a minute his need to look at roses in France at the busiest moment in his professional year. Every object in every home, centuries' worth of possessions, has been collected largely because he could collect them; his houses are vast repositories of wealth, full of everything from rare porcelain dogs to eighteenth-century ironwork. The grounds, gardens, and rooms are crammed with objects: furniture, paintings, pottery, Meissen swans, and wooden ducks. Even some of the objects are filled with objects. The art alone—Picassos, Basquiats, antique vases from China, eighteenth-century French glass, the Boteros and Rothkos, Warhols and Bacons, the commodes and tapestries and breakfronts and porcelain and crystal and silver—seems as if it were assembled as scenery for a film about a modern-day Marie Antoinette. As Oprah Winfrey put it when Valentino appeared on her show last year, "You ain't seen nothing like this, honey. No one, and I mean no one, lives better than Mr. Valentino." He likes to think she's right. "I have all these things—yachts and houses. And they say I am insane, this is not the world anymore, nobody lives this way. Maybe I did a mistake, but I want these things in my life. My eyes want to see perfection. Some people have said to me, 'You have too many houses and rooms.' But too much for whom?"

Valentino has been obsessed with glamour from the time he was a teen-ager. "My mother used to say, 'How did I produce a son who will only accept the most expensive things?' I was thirteen, fourteen, and she gave me money to go to the shoemaker, to have shoes made, and sweaters. Even then, I had to have them done my way. I didn't want what everybody else could have. I was a big dreamer, always a big dreamer. Vivien Leigh, Hedy Lamarr, Lana Turner, and Katharine Hepburn—I am a designer today because I would dream of those ladies in fox coats and lamé, coming down those grand staircases they had in the movies. That was what I thought about. That was what I wanted." He got his wish when he met Jacqueline Kennedy. His voice still drifts up an octave when he mentions her. "Jackie, walking in Central Park with little pants, big scarf, and a raincoat? All by Valentino! It was sensational." He became truly famous when her picture, in the white lace minidress that she wore for her 1968 wedding to Aristotle Onassis, appeared on the cover of magazines around the world. Valentino's love of celebrated people is palpable; his eyes glisten when he talks about royalty like Princess Rosario of Bulgaria or friends like Gwyneth Paltrow. When I asked him once why dressing such people mattered so much to him, he answered, "Who should I dress? Girls in *streep* malls?"

When it comes to outfitting the regal class for special events, no other designer can compete. Valentino made the dress that Madame Bernadette Chirac wore on the day that her husband became the President of France, and the one that Farah Diba, the Iranian empress, was wearing when she fled her country, in 1979. When the American heiress Marie-Chantal Miller married Crown Prince Pavlos of Greece in London, in 1995, not only did she wear one of Valentino's dresses, made with ten types of lace; dozens in the wedding party wore Valentino as well. (His wedding dresses start at around thirty-five thousand dollars but can cost ten times as much.) "When you think about luxury or femininity, you think about Valentino," the New York socialite Susan Gutfreund told me one afternoon at a charity lunch that Valentino had sponsored for New-York-Presbyterian Hospital. "If I am out at a very important black-tie event, invariably when a man comes up and tells me how lovely I look it's always a Valentino dress. Always." This summer, Valentino was working on wedding dresses for Athina Onassis and for two minor princesses. One hot day in June, I stood in his atelier, on the Piazza Mignanelli, and watched as his team of aging seamstresses, working with magnifying glasses under klieg lights, stitched hundreds of little jewels onto several gowns. I asked Giancarlo Giammetti whether he thought this tradition could last much longer. He shook his head. "No, of course not. Why would a young woman want to sit eight hours a day with an eye loupe sewing and embroidering a pattern? And for whom, some princess in Saudi Arabia? Or the girlfriend of some international Russian thug?"

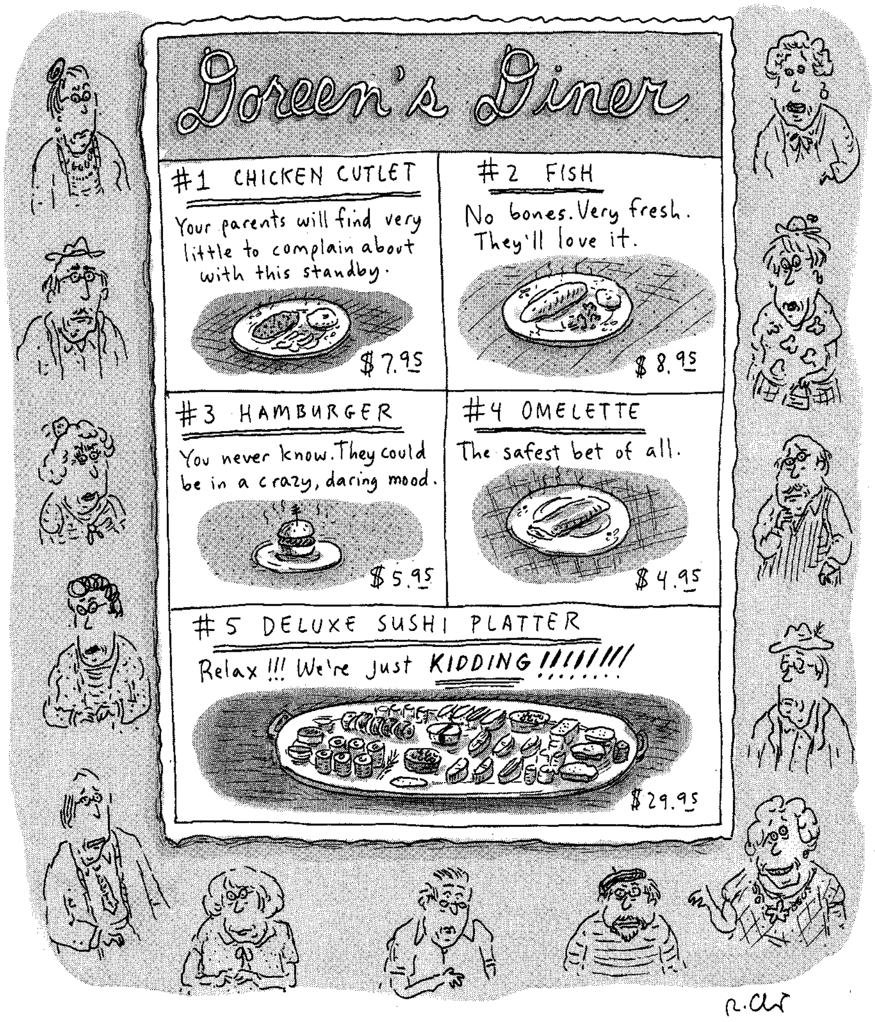
There is at least one market in the United States for gowns like these: Hollywood. Valentino puts almost as much effort into the Academy Awards each year as Harvey Weinstein does. In 2001, audiences around the world saw

Julia Roberts accept the Oscar for "Erin Brockovich" in a vintage black silk gown that he made in 1992. Jessica Lange, Sophia Loren, and Jane Fonda have all worn his dresses to accept their Oscars, and in most years at least a dozen prominent stars wear his clothes on the red carpet. Last year, for the first time, there was only one. Cate Blanchett, nominated as Best Supporting Actress for her performance as Katharine Hepburn in "The Aviator," selected a dress made of yellow silk taffeta with a burgundy sash. Stars usually ask several designers for dresses and then, under the influence of their stylists, publicists, and managers, decide what they will wear at the last moment. Carlos de Souza, Valentino's longtime spokesman, is dispatched every spring to run the Oscar operations from Valentino's Beverly Hills boutique. He promised Blanchett that no one would wear Valentino that night if she guaranteed that she would. She agreed immediately. De Souza turned everyone else down, even Valentino's favorite model, Gisele Bündchen, who was going to attend with her boyfriend, Leonardo DiCaprio. Neither Giammetti nor Valentino was pleased. "I said, 'Gisele is not an actress, for God's sake. Give a dress to Gisele,'" Giammetti told me. "And Carlos said, 'I cannot do it.' And I said, 'Yes, do it. This is insane!'" De Souza stood his ground, and the gamble paid off: Blanchett won. Michele Norsa, the company's C.E.O., was delighted. "Hundreds of millions of people watched," he said. "Even the doorman in your building, or his wife, would have been looking at that dress. It is very exclusive, but that makes it popular as well. Now, of course you will not then go out and sell a three-hundred-thousand-dollar dress." In fact, Valentino, and all other couture designers, lose money on those dresses. "But you sell the fifty-dollar bottle of perfume or the sunglasses or some shoes. And that helps give the brand a special feeling."

There are limits even to Valentino's love of celebrity. At one point, de Souza had arranged for Lindsay Lohan to attend the couture show in Paris, but while we were on the boat he informed Valentino that Lohan's stylist had cancelled. "Thank God," Valentino whispered. "She makes me so uncomfortable." Another day, at lunch, he was talking about the media's obsession with fame. Paris Hilton was in the news for a change. Her engagement to the scion of a Greek shipping fortune had just been announced, and I asked Valentino if he wanted to design her wedding dress. He shuddered and replied, "No. I don't like her. She is marrying the son of a friend of mine. They have billions. She is vulgar and she is not even pretty." He was silent for a moment. Then he added, dismissively, "The Hiltons. They have nothing."

People attending their first fashion show almost always react the same way: who could possibly wear that stuff? The clothes, often too narrowly cut, are unorthodox for anyone who is shorter than six feet or weighs more than a hundred pounds. Valentino's designs are an exception. He makes dresses that are feminine, graceful, and flirty in a way that both men and women find flattering. It is a surprisingly rare quality, and one that is not particularly prized among fashion professionals. Women often have another view. "I look at that runway and I want to own every dress," the actress Rita Wilson told me after Valentino's most recent show in Paris. It was a comment that one hears repeatedly in response to the question of what makes Valentino so popular. He doesn't possess Miuccia Prada's sense that a wardrobe should challenge the mind, nor does he believe that flamboyance or pyrotechnics helps sell a suit. Nobody has ever walked out of his collections—as happened with Yves St. Laurent's influential gypsy show in 1976, or with John Galliano's bias-cut all-black collection of 1994—seeing fashion in an entirely new way.

YOUR KIDS HAVE *THEIR* MENU... YOU HAVE *YOUR* MENU...
ISN'T IT TIME THAT YOUR PARENTS HAD *THEIR* MENU?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Your parents will find very little to complain about with this standby.
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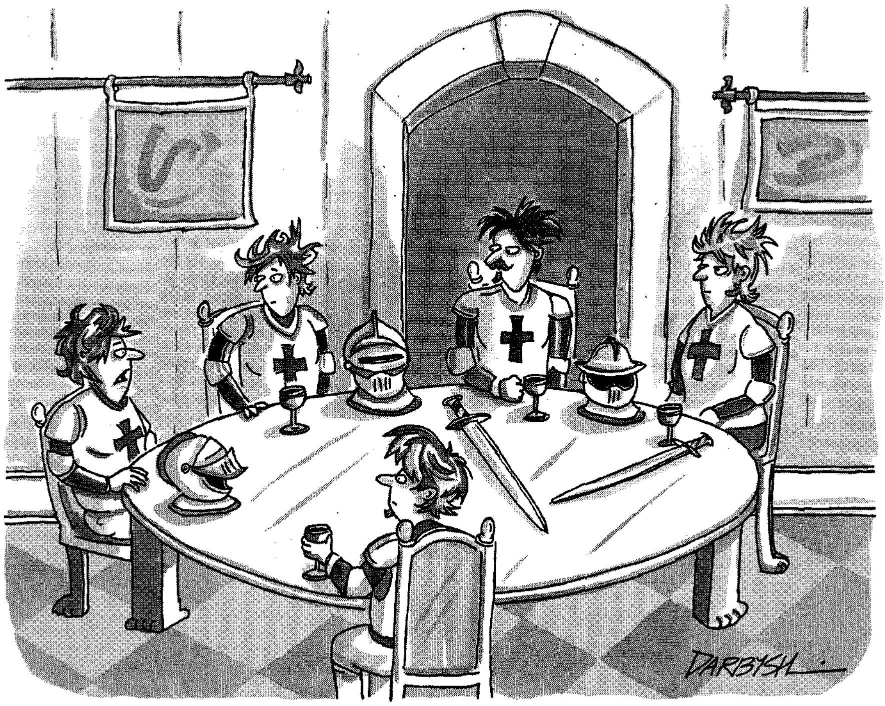

"We've been victorious in many battles, and yet helmet hair remains our fiercest foe."

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In fact, Valentino remains endearingly indifferent to the idea of fashion as art. "Let us face it," he said. "Fashion is not so complex. It is about making a woman beautiful. That and nothing else. . . . The style today, the fashion, I don't always understand it. Take Galliano. He is a great artist. He can create the biggest fantasy in the world. But to wear those clothes in the street? I don't think so. Sometimes we forget: the lady makes the dress. I am not somebody who is just looking at Gisele and hoping she will wear my clothes. As a model, yes, she is my dream. But a nice, gutsy lady with lots of personality to her is my dream, too. I love a woman who eats food, who has a body, that is a woman and not a stick."

Beginning late in May, Valentino rents a jet every weekend and flies wherever the T. M. Blue One happens to be docked; each summer, it works its way around the Mediterranean, usually starting with a trip to Saint-Tropez and proceeding, as whim dictates, to places like Cap d'Antibes, Ponza, and Portofino, with forays to Greece or Turkey (and, this year, to Croatia). In August, when the fashion business shuts down, he spends the entire month at sea, because, as he explained one day, he has no alternative. "I am a prisoner. My staff in Rome, in London, in Paris, even in New York—they are all gone. I cannot go anywhere. I am stranded." The T. M. Blue One is named for his parents, Teresa and Mauro, both of whom are now dead. The boat is fitted out in mahogany and brass, with plush wool carpeting, soft white sofas, and navy-blue pillows embroidered with its insignia. There are five staterooms, two espresso machines, and, for Valentino, a fairly modest smattering of Warhols, Picassos, and artists like Robert Mapplethorpe. "This is his spartan side," de Souza told me as eight men wearing white T. M. Blue One uniforms relieved us of our bags one Saturday morning in June. "This and the chalet in Gstaad." The boat was anchored just off Porto Santo Stefano, a popular seaside village at the foot of Tuscany, about two hours from Rome. Valentino and his boyfriend, Bruce Hoeksema, had arrived the previous evening. As we came aboard, Valentino stood on the deck, dressed in silk shorts and a white cashmere sweater. Mishearing the word "spartan," he turned to de Souza and said, " 'Spare.' Did you say 'spare'?" He went on, "Spare, spare, what is spare? I hate that word."

Each morning, the boat's decks are swabbed by Valentino's personal navy of sailors in white jumpsuits and yellow Wellingtons. His entourage rarely varies. Giammetti is nearly always with him; his stateroom is equipped with a flat-screen television and an Ethernet plug that connects him, by satellite, to the Internet. (It's the only one on the boat; Valentino wouldn't know the Internet from a lobster net.) The other man who is almost always on the boat with Valentino is Hoeksema, a soft-spoken forty-eight-year-old American who moved to Italy twenty years ago as a model and never left. Hoeksema now owns a leather-goods factory near Florence and designs high-end handbags and jewelry, which he sells in his boutique, VBH, in a former bank opposite the Whitney Museum, on Madison Avenue. They are often joined by de Souza, a fifty-year-old Brazilian who met the designer and Giammetti at a party in Rio de Janeiro when he was a teen-ager. Soon afterward, he moved to Rome. De Souza recently shifted his base of operations to New York, where Valentino's business is expanding, but he maintains homes in Rome and Brazil and spends a large part of his life shuttling among them.

De Souza's ex-wife, Charlene Shorto, is also a member of this ensemble; she and de Souza maintain a cordial relationship, and Valentino and Giammetti are godfathers to their two sons. In one configuration or another, this group is together all the time; they travel in a pack—this summer to Bali, last year to St. Petersburg—and their holidays are often spent rock climbing in Turkey or exploring the beaches of Morocco. The previous weekend, Valentino had been host to Gwyneth Paltrow, who is a close friend of his, and her husband, the Coldplay singer Chris Martin. ("Apple is a vegan," Valentino said, his eyes wide at the notion of a fourteen-month-old child with politically inspired dietary habits.)

Valentino is not a spontaneous man; surprises displease him. "With Valentino, nothing is left to chance," Graziano de Boni, who runs the American operations for Valentino, had told me.

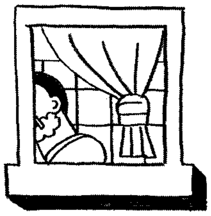
"Nothing." That becomes clear after ten minutes on the boat. Valentino can fuss over the consistency of a guest's *macchiato*, the temperature of his ice cream, even the number of ice cubes in a glass. "I need to know that my guests are taken care of, that the breakfast is good," he said. "I want to know which kind of bedsheets my guests have and how often they are changed. I want to know how many times my staff will approach the room." They approach constantly. Leave a shirt on your bed (dirty or clean) and it will be laundered the moment you step out of the cabin. Each morning, along with a lavish breakfast, the staff assembles some reading material. Among the magazines that I noticed were *OK!*, *Chi*, *Oggi*, *Gente*, *Hello!*, *¡Hola!*, *Paris Match*, *L'Uomo*, and four editions of *Vogue*. (Nobody boards the T. M. Blue One itching for a round-table discussion of global warming.) Freshly baked muffins were set out by 7:30, with figs, berries, apples, peaches, and melon. The host likes to take breakfast alone—usually tea and toast. He is not an early riser, on land or at sea. "I often get up at six," he told me matter-of-factly. "Then I take a pill and go back to sleep."

Valentino spends much of the day sunning himself on the top deck. From time to time, small tourist boats cruise by in hopes of getting a glimpse of him; he is so famous in Italy that many people even recognize his yacht. He waves dutifully, then goes back to his couch, surrounded by several of the five pugs he travels with. (Maggie is too old to be moved.) He enjoys being on display; he is certainly not one of those rich people who are tortured by ambivalence. "When I was young, I used to go to Saint-Tropez with my friends and stay fifteen days," he told me one afternoon. "I would walk in the port and see those yachts there, and I wanted one. And I have to tell you that if I had one now I would be ashamed—they were just too small." For someone who has lived in Rome for nearly half a century, Valentino has a strong predilection for the cold. The living room on the T. M. Blue One feels like a meat locker. "You will need a cashmere," Hoeksema announced the day Carlos de Souza and I came aboard. "Cashmere" is Valentino for "sweater." There were two cashmere blankets in my room. I needed them both, and I found myself wanting a third. The next day, I asked why the boat was so icy. "I hate it sweaty," Valentino said. "I detest wet things."

Being on time for meals is perhaps the only requirement for a guest on the T. M. Blue One. Lunch on Sunday was served at 2 P.M. Hoeksema arrived at 2:02, having just taken a shower. His shoulder-length blond hair was still wet, and Valentino was not amused. "You have fringes," he said gruffly. Hoeksema looked at the ends of his hair, shrugged, and sat down. "Upholstery has fringes," Valentino said. His eyes, blue enough to match the sea, were cold. "Tapestries have fringes. Rugs. Sometimes furniture. Not humans." Valentino dragged a hand through his own hair, which had just been blown firmly into place. "Humans do not have fringes."

Giancarlo Giammetti grew up in Rome, where his father had a small electrical-supply store. He studied architecture but was an indifferent student, and spent most of his time on the Via Veneto. ("It was always wild in Rome then," he said.) One night in 1960, he was sitting in the Café de Paris, waiting for a nearby night club to open. "Suddenly, I see this man," he recalled. "And he and his two friends came up and asked if they could sit with me. It was Valentino."

They have been together for forty-five years, and they are as close as it is possible for two men who are no longer lovers to be. "When we are not together, we talk seven times a day," Valentino told me. "Or more." The tender boat on the T. M. Blue One is called the G.G., and neither of the men would think of taking a holiday without the other. This spring, when Giammetti decided to rent part of the Four Seasons in Bali for the group to visit in July, Valentino was unenthusiastic. He told me that he wasn't going to go. De Souza laughed when I repeated that to him. "What would he do all that time without Giancarlo?" he said, and one afternoon in London, when I finally asked Valentino if he had changed his mind about the trip, he nodded slowly and said, "Apparently."



Neither Valentino nor Giammetti is comfortable discussing details of his personal life. "We are from another generation," Giammetti told me one day. "So we still have that reserve about what people do in bed." He marvelled at how rarely in life "two people can understand each other and support each other as we do. Of course," he went on, "there are moments in which you cannot stand the other person for two hours, for three hours, for half a day maybe. You fight over a stupid dress or a stupid phrase that one says and that you don't like to hear. This is normal. Over all, this has been an amazing relationship between two human beings."

At sixty-seven, Giammetti remains deeply attached to his own good looks. He is trim, with deep-black eyes. His hair used to be gray, but this spring I noticed that it had become brown. ("You will understand one day, when you are old," he said.) Professionally, he and Valentino fit together like the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle: Valentino knows nothing about money (apart from how to spend it), and Giammetti is one of the canniest businessmen in Europe. His office in Rome is three times the size of Valentino's. When the designer asked why that was, Giammetti said, "Look, you just have to draw. I have to intimidate people." Giammetti doesn't mince words when it comes to talking about their goals. "We knew early on we always wanted to have a certain style of life," he said. "And it's expensive." He realized that selling large amounts of luxury apparel could make them rich—but licenses could bring in even more. As a result, Valentino became the first major designer to rent his name to perfume manufacturers, leather companies, and many other businesses. This has earned them millions. At one point, more than a hundred companies were authorized to call themselves Valentino. In 1998, when Giammetti and Valentino sold the company to a large industrial firm for three hundred million dollars, it was a disaster. "I was on the board of directors," Giammetti said of the company, HdP, which owned the Italian book publisher Rizzoli and the *Corriere della Sera*, among others. "We were the last interest for them." For the first time, Valentino started losing money heavily, and there was nothing Giammetti could do but watch. In 2002, Marzotto, which was once a textile firm, purchased the company for almost a hundred million dollars less than HdP had paid.

"The company was losing fifty million dollars when we bought it three years ago," Norsa, the Valentino C.E.O., told me. In 2004, Valentino's sales increased by twelve per cent and the company broke even. "This year, there will be a substantial profit," he said, pointing out that in the United States sales increased forty per cent in 2003 and fifty-three per cent last year.

The demise of haute couture has been predicted since at least the nineteen-sixties, when factory-made clothing became as common as factory-made cars, and the schedule of shows and the number of haute-couture designers have shrunk over the years. Even so, Norsa said, "we never sold so many couture dresses as we did this year. There is a new world of luxury. In the past, luxurious clothing was purchased by very sophisticated people. Now there are people who have a lot of money and need to buy very expensive things. It's somehow different. Some of the new riches from the Middle East, from Asia, from India—they want these items and they don't think of them as outrageously expensive, as we might in the more civilized world."

In July, the guest list for Valentino's Paris couture show read like a *Who's Who* of Arabia: Princess Al Anoud Al Khalifa was there, and so were Princess Sara bin Mohamed bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, Princess Haifa Al Saud, Princess Nauf Al Saud, and Princess Firyal of Jordan, among others. (There were also Western members of the royal and the royally rich universe: Madame Margarita Latsis, Princess Clotilde de Savoie, Princess Rosario of Bulgaria, Countess Georgina Brandolini d'Adda, and Princess d'Arenberg. Madame Chirac also attended, as did at least one Rothschild, and the Marquise de Ravenel.) Until 1974, Valentino showed his work in Rome and in Florence; but in the nineteen-seventies the film industry began to die, unemployment soared, and the Red Brigades terrorized the country. Roman couture never recovered. Valentino rejected Milan and, instead, began to show his dresses in Paris. ("In Milan, on a big evening, the men wear no ties. The women play the poor girl and dress like nuns.") His offices are on the Place Vendôme, where the windows, which are about ten feet high, look out on the Ritz and on the constant stream of people shopping at the most expensive jewelry stores in the world.

Most models are absurdly tall and freakishly thin, and couture gowns usually demand both qualities: the stitching is delicate, the fabrics—lace, taffeta, silk, panne velvet—are easy to rip. Karolina Kurkova, who has often modelled for Valentino, is one of the world's most famously alluring women. She even has hips and an ass. For gay designers, however, such features are horrifying. Two days before the show, when Kurkova took her practice walk in a long green chiffon dress, Giammetti just shook his head, like a pitcher sloughing off a bad sign from his catcher. Kurkova didn't notice, but Valentino did. "I use very slim models without bosoms, to be free to create," he once said. "Sometimes, if the model has a bosom or a little big hips, it gets in the way. That is important when I create something new. Later, it can be translated for women much larger." When I asked him about this, he shrugged. "They have to have a certain look, a special look," he explained. "That is why I like the Brazilian girls."

On the evening of the show, Valentino arrived at the Trocadéro two hours early. He surveyed the red silk chairs—there were several hundred—and the lighting. He seemed satisfied. A small army of young men—all identically dressed in black suits and white shirts and looking a little like Tom Cruise circa "Risky Business"—filed into the room. Valentino looked as though he had come directly from the dry cleaners. He wore a crisp white shirt with a gray tie and had on makeup, because he would have to face many television cameras. I asked him if he was nervous. "Why? Why at this point should I worry, why?" he said. "I am not a nervous, worrying man. What I make I like, and if they"—he gave a regal wave

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SHOWCASE

THE CONSPIRATOR

A great fashion photograph involves layers of artifice, the most difficult to achieve being the appearance of spontaneity—the staged surprise that only professionals can pull off. Richard Avedon made spontaneity a specialty, and, no matter how orchestrated the gesture or the expression, it always had the power of conviction. From the beginning, Avedon was able to communicate through his models, not as a ventriloquist does with his dummy but like a director whose authority is tempered by affection for his actors. And he knew how to use theatricality to get at something real, even revelatory. Avedon's rigorous approach to portraiture—"No to exquisite light, no to apparent compositions, no to the seduction of poses or narrative," he once said—amounted to a rejection of fashion photography's imperatives. Portraiture provided relief from fashion's strictures, but turning regularly from one to the other kept him fresh.

Both passions meet in "Woman in the Mirror" (Abrams), the book he compiled shortly before his death, last October. To judge by the work here—made between 1945 and 2004, some of it for this magazine—the photographer was a man who loved women. His interest in them, though, wasn't predatory; it was sympathetic, almost conspiratorial. In a 1949 picture for *Harper's Bazaar*, he spied on the model Dorian Leigh, who was wearing a silly bunny hat as she applied eyeliner with exaggerated concentration. The image is comic and candid—a knowing glimpse at the backstage work that goes into high-stakes glamour. The mirror, like the camera lens, invites a woman to look inward, and Avedon follows her gaze doggedly, lovingly, all the way.

—*Vince Aletti*

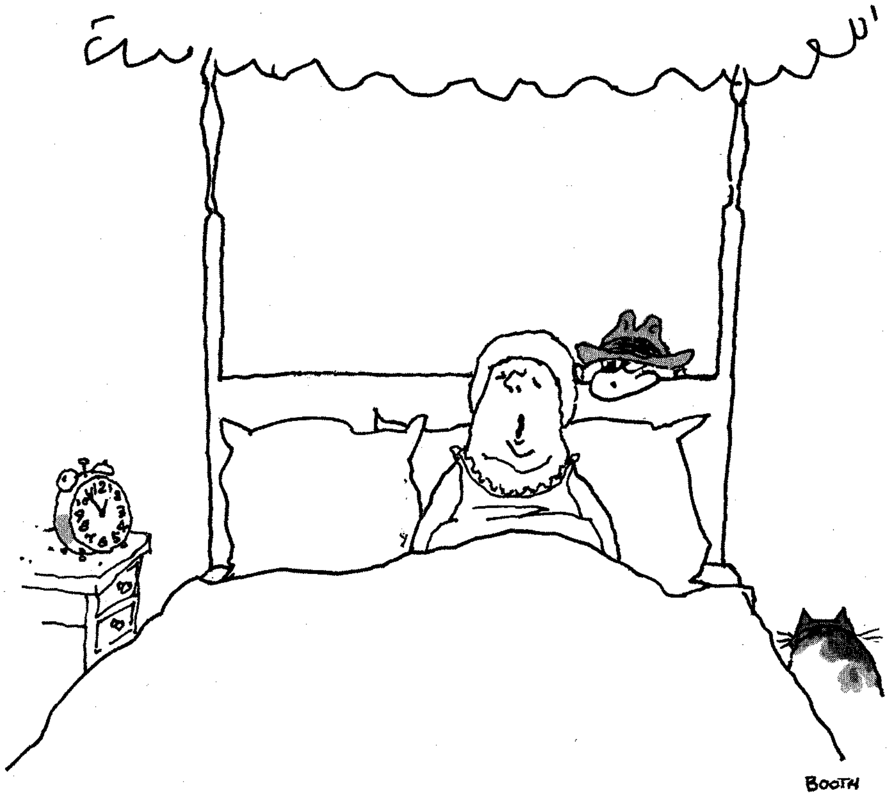
COURTESY THE RICHARD AVEDON FOUNDATION

of his left hand toward seats that would soon be filled by his clients—"if they like it, too, I am very pleased. Genuinely. And if not...*c'est le même prix*." De Souza shot him a reproachful look that suggested that he step down from his throne. "I am not trying to be rude or dismissive," Valentino said. "I worked on this hard. I *love* the dresses." He walked over and ran his hands across his favorite, a purple gown covered in a cascade of crystals, which he said was similar to one he had made in the eighties. "This is my *job*, not my life. There is a difference."

Giammetti, on the other hand, looked as if he were about to pass out. One of the reasons that Valentino can afford to be nonchalant is that his business partner doesn't have a nonchalant bone in his body. Valentino doesn't read the reviews of his shows. By 8 A.M. the next morning, Giammetti had not only read them but was ready to call the writers to complain. He had just quit smoking, not for the first time, for what he described as the usual reasons ("My hair was turning yellow"), but now he had to have one. "The press craves entertainment," he said glumly. "Galliano knows how to put on a show, and people have come to expect extravagance." He threw up his hands and lit another cigarette. Gwyneth Paltrow, wearing jeans and a blue blazer, arrived, kissed both men, and then retreated to a private room to await the start of the show.

Fashion shows usually begin late, and this one was no exception. "It's Madame Chirac," Valentino said. Madame Chirac was upset because dozens of photographers were out front, eager to take her picture. "She hurt her foot," a woman from the press department in Rome explained. "She can't wear heels, and she doesn't want her picture taken in flats. She said if the photographers don't stop she will leave." The crisis eventually dissipated, Madame Chirac took her seat in the front row, and the show began. It lasted fifteen minutes. Karolina Kurkova walked down the runway three times, and no one hissed. When it was over, Valentino ducked onto the runway, one hand on his hip, and gave a tight little wave with the other. I asked him how he thought Kurkova looked. "Magical," he said. "She is magical." (The reviews were mixed, most suggesting that the designer had got a bit carried away. "Valentino is of the joyous couture school that fashion should be fun, fancy, rising up to the summit of elegance and often way over the top," Suzy Menkes wrote the next day in the *International Herald Tribune*. "You have to admire Valentino's defiant decorative stance, even if not too many modern women still want to present their femininity as a band box gift to an attentive male.")

Afterward, Giammetti hosted a small dinner at his apartment on the Quai d'Orsay. The apartment has gorgeous views of the city, and is filled with paintings by Cy Twombly, Picasso, and Bacon, among others. (Giammetti once explained how he and Valentino got their first Picassos: "His tailor lived in Milan, and we knew him. He had a nice collection and was willing to sell some at reasonable prices.") The singer Sheryl Crow said that she was especially excited by the white satin dress that she had just seen on the runway. "I want to get married in that white dress," she announced. At the time, her boyfriend, Lance Armstrong, was in the midst of winning his seventh consecutive Tour de France. "Of course, he would need to win first," she said, laughing. "And I guess he would have to propose this season or the dress will be gone." One of the guests, the Italian artist Francesco Vezzoli, pointed to the dining room. The table had been set with a buffet, and people were starting to gravitate toward it. Several women, some of them royal, stood beneath a Warhol portrait of Lenin. "That room is almost too good to believe, isn't it?" Vezzoli said. "There they are: Warhol, Lenin, and every princess who ever bought a dress."



"No."

The following night, it was Valentino's turn to entertain. He invited nearly a hundred and fifty people to his three-hundred-acre estate, the Château de Wideville, thirty kilometres west of Paris. Valentino bought the place in 1995 and spent millions redecorating it with the help of Henri Samuel, the pre-eminent French interior designer, who died, at the age of ninety-three, after working on the house. In the sixteen-sixties, it served as the home of Louise de la Vallière, Louis XIV's mistress. It's not far from Versailles. Nor is it much of a step in the direction of moderation. The gardens are among the most extensive in Europe. Mademoiselle de la

Vallière bore four of Louis's seventeen children at Wideville, and rarely left the estate until the King moved on to a new mistress. She then entered a Carmelite convent, where she spent the rest of her life.

It was not a good day for a party. That morning, four bombs had exploded in London, and the terrorist attacks had left fifty-six people dead. Even Valentino, who is not a political man ("I come from Italy. All they ever talk about is soccer and politics"), realized that the bombings might prevent some people from attending an event celebrating the end of a week in which seventy-five-thousand-dollar jewel-encrusted dresses had been shown, but he never considered cancelling, and neither, in the end, did many of his guests.

Valentino wanted his friends to spend some time in his garden. That proved impossible. In addition to the horrible news from London that morning, the day brought English weather—cold and wet. Late in the afternoon, he handed me an oversized umbrella and suggested that I take a walk. Despite the pouring rain, it was worth the effort. There are two hundred and eighty cherry trees on the property at Wideville, and each June they shower the landscape with pink petals. By July, they had faded, but the fields were filled with lilacs, freesia, lilies, sunflowers, impatiens, irises, wisteria, daffodils, and gardenias. Deep thickets of red, blue, pink, and yellow buds seemed to stretch to Normandy. Then there was the lavender patch: bright purple and almost the size of a football field, the effect of stumbling upon it, even on such a grim day, was psychedelic. The grounds at Wideville have enough topiary—dozens of acres that seemed to have been manicured with nail clippers—to keep twelve full-time gardeners busy throughout the year (with several more hired each summer to help out). Finally, there is what Valentino describes as the largest rose garden in the world—acres of roses in nearly every color imaginable. "I don't want to exaggerate," he said when I returned. "But do you know how many roses there are here? A million. Not tens or even hundreds of thousands. But a million."

"The key is to blame the federal government without implicating this Administration."

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Michael Kelly, the discreet Irishman who has served as Valentino's chief butler for seven years, came over to brief him on the cheese situation. He had two telephones clipped to his belt, one for talking to the staff and the other for the rest of the world. "It's coming," he said as Valentino peered at his watch. It was the only time I ever saw him look anxious. It was seven-thirty. His guests were due to arrive in an hour. "It will be here in time." Valentino did not look relieved. Assembling the menus for these events is one of his great pleasures; he had selected thirty-two dishes and asked the cook from his boat to work alongside the regular chef. There would be several types of pasta, lamb, four fish dishes, a Northern Italian casserole with chicken and another with shrimp. For dessert, there were homemade ice creams, four cakes, several types of chocolate, profiteroles, and floating islands. Valentino would never be satisfied, however, without his cheese—mozzarella produced that morning and flown directly from Naples. (For Valentino, using mozzarella made anywhere other than Naples would be as likely as serving "champagne" from Italy, or "caviar" taken from salmon raised in the Pacific Northwest.) The bombings had thrown Europe's airports into chaos, however, and hundreds of planes had been delayed, including the one that carried the cheese, but finally, at eight-ten, a white minivan pulled up to the moat. Valentino watched from a window in the foyer as two men in lab coats carefully removed six volleyball-size globes of mozzarella. Then, moving as if they were carrying nitroglycerin, they inched slowly toward the kitchen. As soon as they were inside, Valentino went upstairs to change.

Kelly looked relieved, but he soon had another problem on his hands: the lighting of the candles. The drive from the entrance of the estate to the château is almost a kilometre; Valentino had instructed his staff to place fifteen hundred votive candles, one every metre or two, along the driveway and on the lawns nearby. Precisely at eight, a dozen employees fanned out from the front door and began to light them. It wasn't easy. The candles were nestled in glass, which was supposed to protect them from the elements, but the wind kept blowing them out. For the next half hour, men in black scrambled across the lawns, lighting and relighting candles until the first car rolled toward the gate.

Kelly holds a unique position as Valentino's butler—a sort of chief operating officer in an empire of luxury. He is a tall, rangy, good-humored man who can endure being yelled at in three languages at once; the only thing that betrays his thoughts are his eyes, which seem capable of wandering all over his face. Kelly is young, but he is nonetheless a throwback—part Stevens, the impeccable butler in "The Remains of the Day," and part certified public accountant. At Wideville, he oversees thirty rooms and a staff that can range—as it did that night—to forty-three. "We can accommodate twenty guests staying with us comfortably for a weekend," he said. "These days, a private house is run like a Relais & Châteaux hotel. We have plans, and budgets and computers to keep track of it all." The requirements of his profession have evolved rapidly, as have the type of people for whom he is likely to work. "There is no more landed gentry," he said. "These days, even the wealthy work. So they are at their country houses maybe on weekends or once in a while or rarely. But when they are here they expect everything to be the way they want it. This is all very personal for him."

It seemed a thankless job, but Kelly didn't think so. "I have known a lot of wealthy people, and almost nobody can put this together and make it work," he told me. "You can acquire money, but you can't necessarily learn how to live with it. Mr. Valentino knows. He enjoys life. It's a talent that people don't often have, even very rich people. . . . I can't stress that enough. He loves to live this way. And you become hooked on him, and you can't get him out of your blood." As we were talking, somebody handed Kelly a fax. He sighed. "What is it?" I asked. "The staff from the T.M."—Valentino's yacht. "They have run out of his Christian Constant chocolates and need me to send enough to last the summer."

By eight-thirty, the candles were lit, the tables were arranged, and the guests had begun to arrive. Two women were assigned to hand out carefully drawn note cards with each guest's name on the front and the number of the table on the back. But a last-minute examination of the seating charts revealed a new crisis: a guest had, unaccountably, been left out. Kelly sprang into action. Both phones were off his belt and in his hands within thirty seconds. Giancarlo Giammetti was summoned to the dining room. As Gwyneth Paltrow, the editors of most of the world's fashion magazines, and a few princesses sipped Bellinis in the drawing room, Giammetti raced to the porch, where dinner would be served, and seized the master seating chart. "*Come faccio adesso*?" he shouted. "How could this happen? How?" Kelly tried to reassure him that he would find a solution. "No, I'll do it," Giammetti snapped. He hovered over the circular chart silently for a few moments. He looked like Bobby Fischer trying to defend his queen from a particularly fierce attack. He toyed with shifting a princess and then a magazine editor or two. Then a rich man from Milan. Finally, he saw his moves; quickly, he banished one person from the head table—where Valentino himself was seated—and slotted in the new guest. Then he adjusted the seating for those who remained. A calligrapher—on duty for just this sort of mishap—was called to correct the errors. By the time the unfortunate man's Mercedes rolled up to the gate, Kelly was there to greet him, and Giammetti was upstairs changing his clothes, the problem forgotten.

CITY OF GLASS

For Pablo Neruda and Matilde Urrutia
La Chascona, Santiago, Chile

The poet's house was a city of glass:
cranberry glass, milk glass, carnival glass,
red and green goblets row after row,
black lustre of wine in bottles,
ships in bottles, zoo of bottles,
rooster, horse, monkey, fish,
heartbeat of clocks tapping against crystal,
windows illuminated by the white Andes,
observatory of glass over Santiago.

When the poet died,
they brought his coffin to the city of glass.
There was no door: the door was a thousand daggers,
beyond the door an ancient world in ruins,
glass now arrowheads, axes, pottery shards, dust.
There were no windows: fingers of air
reached for glass like a missing lover's face.
There was no zoo: the bottles were half-moons
and quarter-moons, horse and monkey
eviscerated with every clock, with every lamp.
Bootprints spun in a lunatic tango across the floor.

I met Valentino for tea a few days later in London. The city was still shaken. Service on the Underground had been restored, but only sporadically, and taxis were moving about three miles an hour. Whenever I had spoken to people about Valentino's luxurious approach to life, they had always said, "Wait till you see Holland Park." Valentino himself, greeting me one day at his villa in Rome, had waved briefly at the majestic lawn and said, "This place is finished for me now. When you see Holland Park, you'll understand why."

Michael Kelly answered the door. He had travelled with the pugs by minivan from Wideville after passing through veterinary control—preceding his boss by several hours—so that the dogs would be there to greet him. Valentino was going to be a few minutes late, Kelly said, and invited me to look around. The house was built in 1870 on Lord Holland's original estate. Valen-

The poet's widow said, *We will not sweep the glass.*
His wake is here. Reporters, photographers,
intellectuals, ambassadors stepped across the glass
cracking like a frozen lake, and soldiers, too,
who sacked the city of glass,
returned to speak for their general,
three days of official mourning
announced at the end of the third day.

In Chile, a river of glass bubbled, cooled,
hardened, and rose in sheets, only to crash and rise again.
One day, years later, the soldiers wheeled around
to find themselves in a city of glass.
Their rifles turned to carnival glass;
bullets dissolved, glittering, in their hands.
From the poet's zoo they heard monkeys cry;
from the poet's observatory they heard
poem after poem like a call to prayer.
The general's tongue burned with slivers
invisible to the eye. The general's tongue
was the color of cranberry glass.

—*Martín Espada*

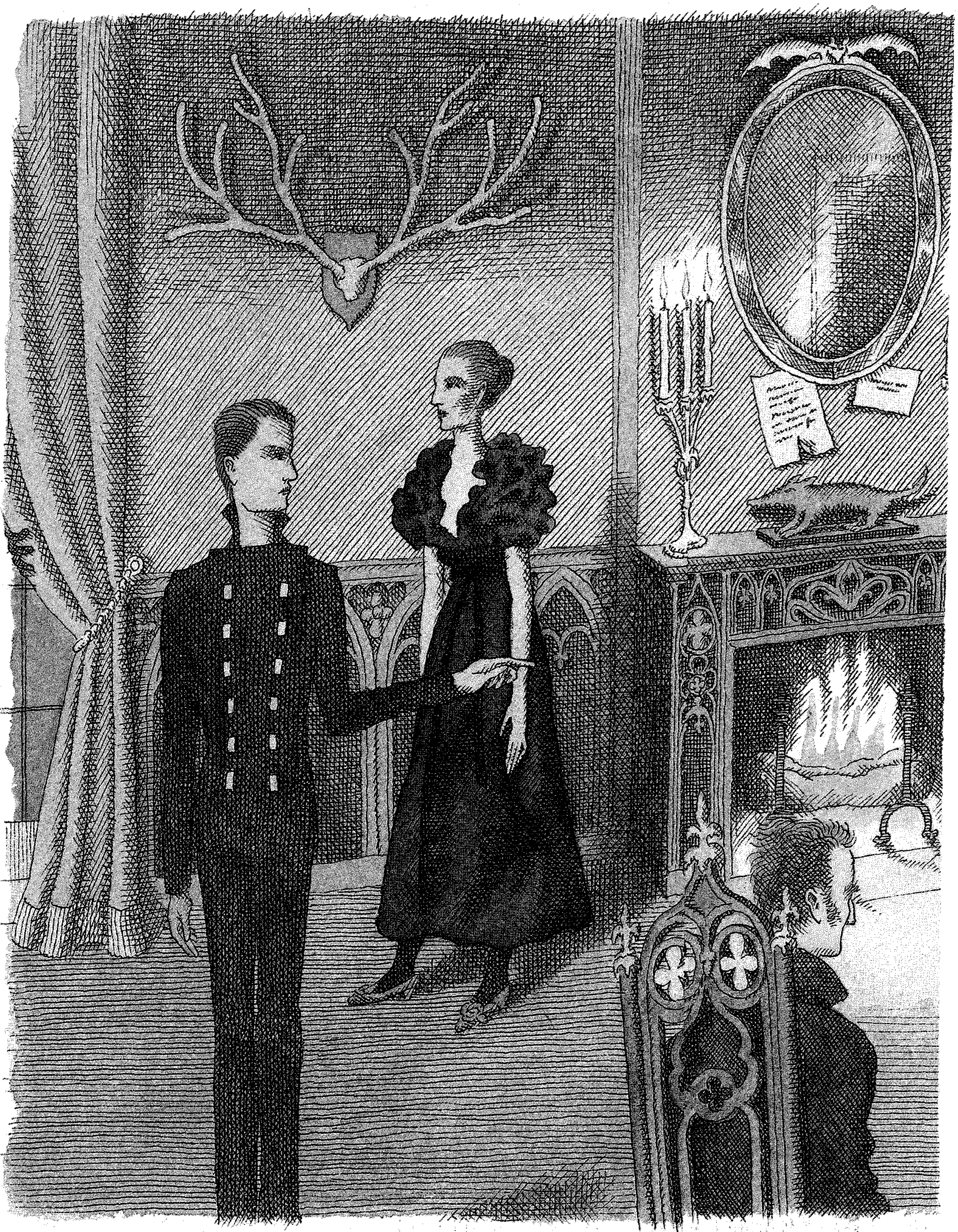
tino bought it a few years ago, restored the Italianate façade, then essentially rebuilt the inside. My first stop was the library. It was filled nearly from floor to ceiling with books that had been beautifully bound in leather long ago: Public Statutes of the County of Warwick, from the eighteen-forties until the eighteen-sixties; lengthy histories of the Church; old copies of *Punch*. Goethe, Schiller, and Hugo were all collected in editions that were both impressive and unapproachable. There was also a row bound in white leather that turned out not to be books at all—or leather, for that matter. They were sculptural, and had been put on the shelves to house an elaborate sound system. Just as I was about to flip one of the switches, Valentino arrived.

"Just a small, small place," he said, and smiled warmly. He was more deeply tanned than usual—as if he had been irradiated. He was wearing a light-brown suit-and-tie combination that looked like pale khaki against his skin. Our first stop was the Blue Room, where there were hundreds of pieces of eighteenth-century porcelain—dishes, urns, bowls, glasses—all in blue and white, and arranged along intricately carved shelves that had been made to look like etched ivory. Valentino had modelled it on the Peacock Room, a dining room from a nineteenth-century town house in London that had been reinstalled at the Freer Gallery of Art, in Washington, D.C. "These I collected for a long, long time," he said. "From Paris, New York, London. I have no place left to put a pin here." Each room was crammed with arcana: commodes from the Pavlos palace, copper and gold Lalanne banquettes, eighteenth-century chairs from the "private collection of the Rothschilds." There were porcelain eagles perched on mantels, and urns, vases, and bowls filled with the flowers of the day: peonies, calla lilies, freesia, orchids, and phalaenopsis.

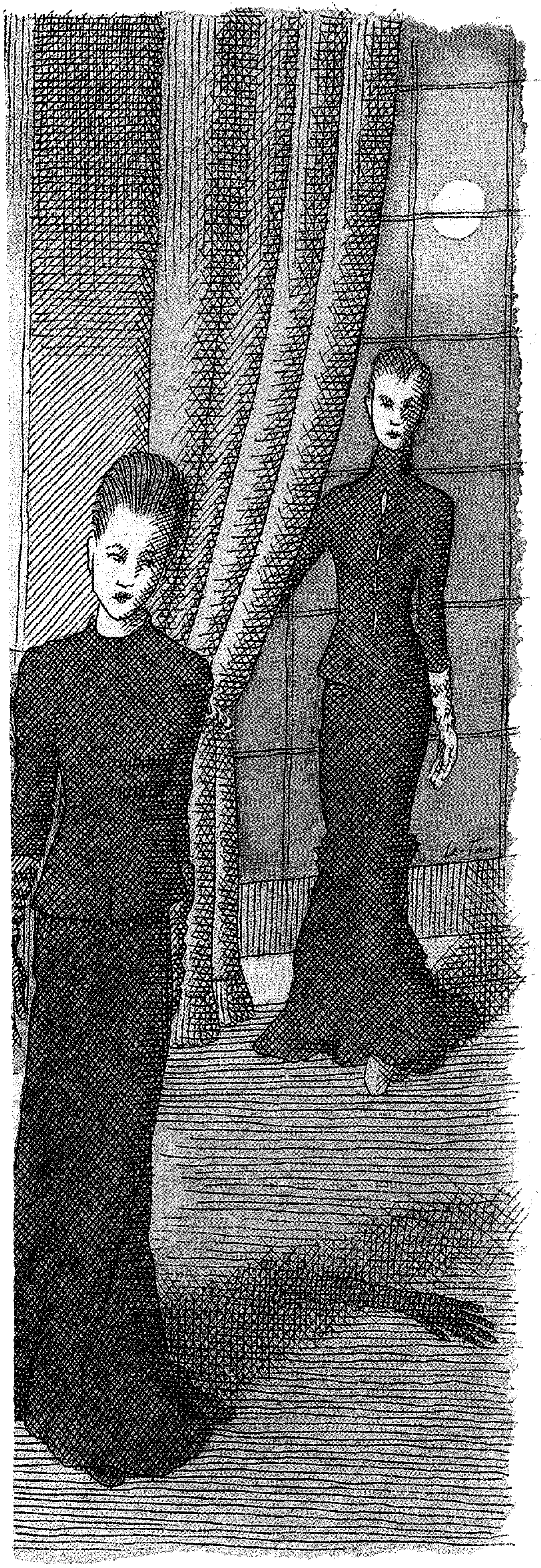
The second floor featured an all-white living room with four Picassos and a dining room filled with Chinese screens that Valentino himself commissioned. "I am a collector," he said, sensing that a question—why?—might be on its way. He rested his hand on an eighteenth-century Chinese dog. "This is what I do." He has also acquired a considerable collection of art for the house: two giant Basquiats—one red and the other blue—were built into frames on walls in the ground-floor sitting room; there were several Picassos, as well as the expected smattering of de Koonings, Hirsts, and Warhols. We walked out onto the back porch and looked at the lawn that rolled into Holland Park. "You are going to write about the wealth and the extravagance," Valentino said. I replied that he did, after all, live in opulent surroundings. "Please," he said, rapping his fingers on the table. "You cannot just write about the opulence of things I own. I have worked like a horse for forty-five years. I am not a showoff person. I love to have my friends enjoy my things. But it's not opulence. What do you think is opulent here? It's *elegant*."

I decided to change the subject, and we talked once again about retirement. Giammetti had told me that slowing down was not an option for Valentino. ("He is not a designer who will say, 'I will do just the couture and the rest I don't care,'" he had said. "He will never accept this. Never. So one day he will stop everything and be gone. There is no middle.") I mentioned this to Valentino. He shrugged in agreement. We were sitting at a white picnic table, and he was sipping a Perrier. "Look, so much has changed," he said. "And I have lived through it. Grunge. My God, how I hated that! But I survived. Purposeful ugliness. Can you imagine that? And now life is different. Ladies don't change four times a day. You can wear anything on top of everything." He sounded a bit tired of it all. "My white coat costs forty-five thousand pounds. They wear it on top of jeans."

He continued, "At some point, you do get to the end. And, when I do, I hope I will be remembered as a man who pursued beauty wherever he could. But when we are done we are done. And that will be the end of it. Finito. After all, this kind of dress is like a Ferrari. If you ever really thought about it, you would never do it." ♦



Dramatic, elongated, Victorian-inspired designs were a recurring theme in this year's fall collections. From left to right, looks



alenciaga, Marc Jacobs, Rochas, and Rochas.

SKETCHBOOK BY PIERRE LE-TAN

BLACK WIDOWS

(with apologies to Edward Gorey)

BY GEORGE SAUNDERS

Captivating Mirna Schmidt, size 3 and getting smaller,
Decided she'd look thinner by abruptly growing taller.
So thin she stretched, so tall she grew, so toward the sun she trended,
The only way one kissed her lips was when sometimes she bended.
So tall she was and tall she is, our stringlike fashion dear,
That sometimes blocking out the sun is Mirna's tiny rear.

Standing next to Mirna is the lovely Dina Fay,
So fitness-conscious she's in gym for twenty hours a day.
The other four she's jogging, two hours home and two hours back,
Inspecting with a mirror all her parts for excess fat.
Got married in Pilates, had her children lifting weights,
Divorced from Rick in yoga, then remarried him on skates.
To you she looks stupendous, so lean, so buff, so hot,
But all the things she is, she feels, she wishes she were not.

Taking photos of the girls is Eddie (LensFace) Loaming,
Who started taking pictures in a small town in Wyoming.
What you'd never know by looking, so uncowboylike he seems:
He got his start with turkeys (used to see them in his dreams).
But now those days are over, and he only works with models,
Who take direction better and have many fewer wattles.

Nellie is so lovely and has always been this fine,
Ever since she was a youngster in the town of Fertile Pine.
Her father owned a pharmacy, and in the boys would come,
Buying tons of Pixy Stix and stocking up on gum.
Years later when they're ancient, and all their teeth are missing,
They still remember Nellie, whom they still have dreams of kissing.

Next to Nellie, Darla Plant, the toast of Escondido,
Who everywhere she goes lays down a trail of spiked libido.
And though she is a beauty, she's not entirely right:
Her body parts don't get along, it's true—in fact they fight.
Her mouth insults her midriff, her ankles hate her gut,
Her coccyx is offended by the coldness of her butt.
And on the floor in front of her (there in that shadowed space):
Her right arm, cut off by the left, so as to spite her face.

On the mantel is a rat, or possibly a puppy,
Stuffed by Craig, a pet-o-phile, a sentimental Yuppie.
Craig lived alone—no kids, no wife—had just that rodent-dog,
Until one day he found the creature lifeless as a log.
He cried all night, he filled the rooms with awful grief-struck trilling,
Then made the thing immortal, via using sand as filling.

Across the graves the widows come, so lithe, so live, so living,
Across the silent resting plots, without one slight misgiving.
For though the dead are there below, and rotting, also ghostly,
The widows feel alive and free, and adequate—well, mostly.
Their legs are long, their blood is warm, their hair is thick and flowing.
They see that some have gone before, but give no thought to going.

Madame Faun, designer, has the purest kind of taste,
Deplores all excess, hates all hype, looks down on foolish waste.
Has roamed the whole world over in her search of sheer perfection,
Has found the whole world lacking, in terms of its selection.
So rarefied, mercurial, dismissive of all fakes,
She's never liked a single thing, not even what she makes.

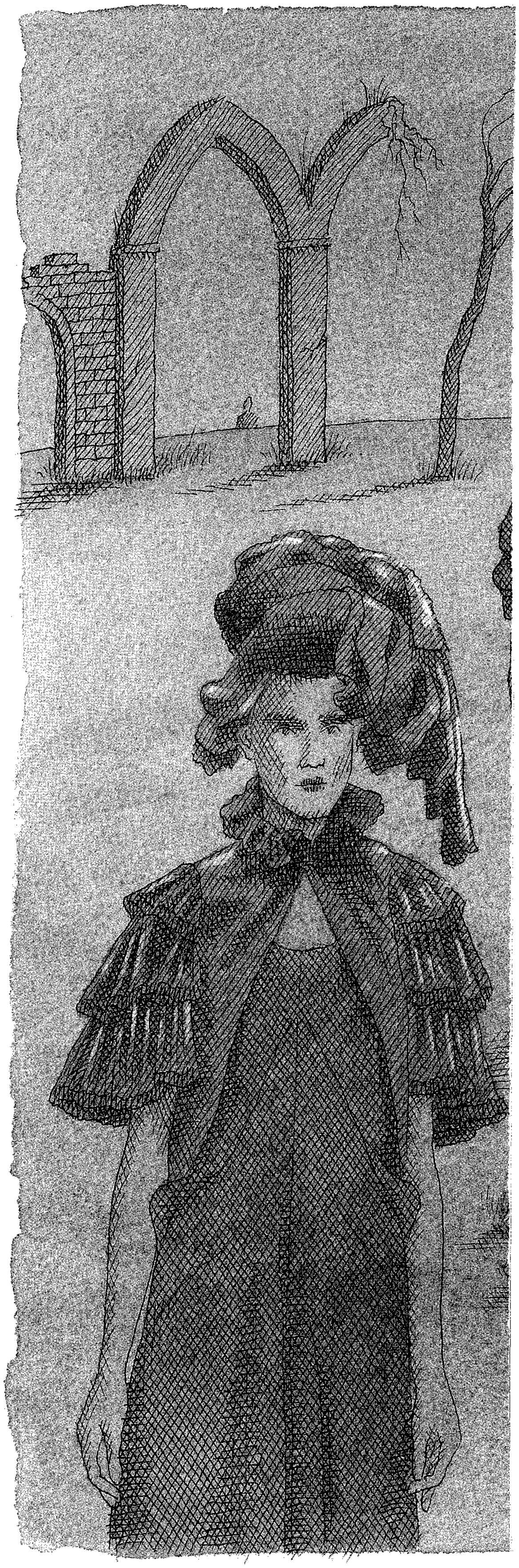
Veronica's so slinky she can outslink Sandy Woo,
Who's fifty times as slinky as an amateur like you.
When both girls slink into a room, the men in said room melt,
So sexy are the two of them, so powerful, so svelte.
When they are all alone sometimes, Veronica and Woo,
They slink just for each other, just to see how good they do.

Lolly is a looker—a dresser and a hottie.
Wears custom-fitted, skintight suits upon her lanky body.
Gets any man she looks at, discards all men she gets,
Will honor her true lover, only hasn't found him yet.
For now, she goes on searching, by making love to many,
And fantasizing late at night about her cousin Penny.

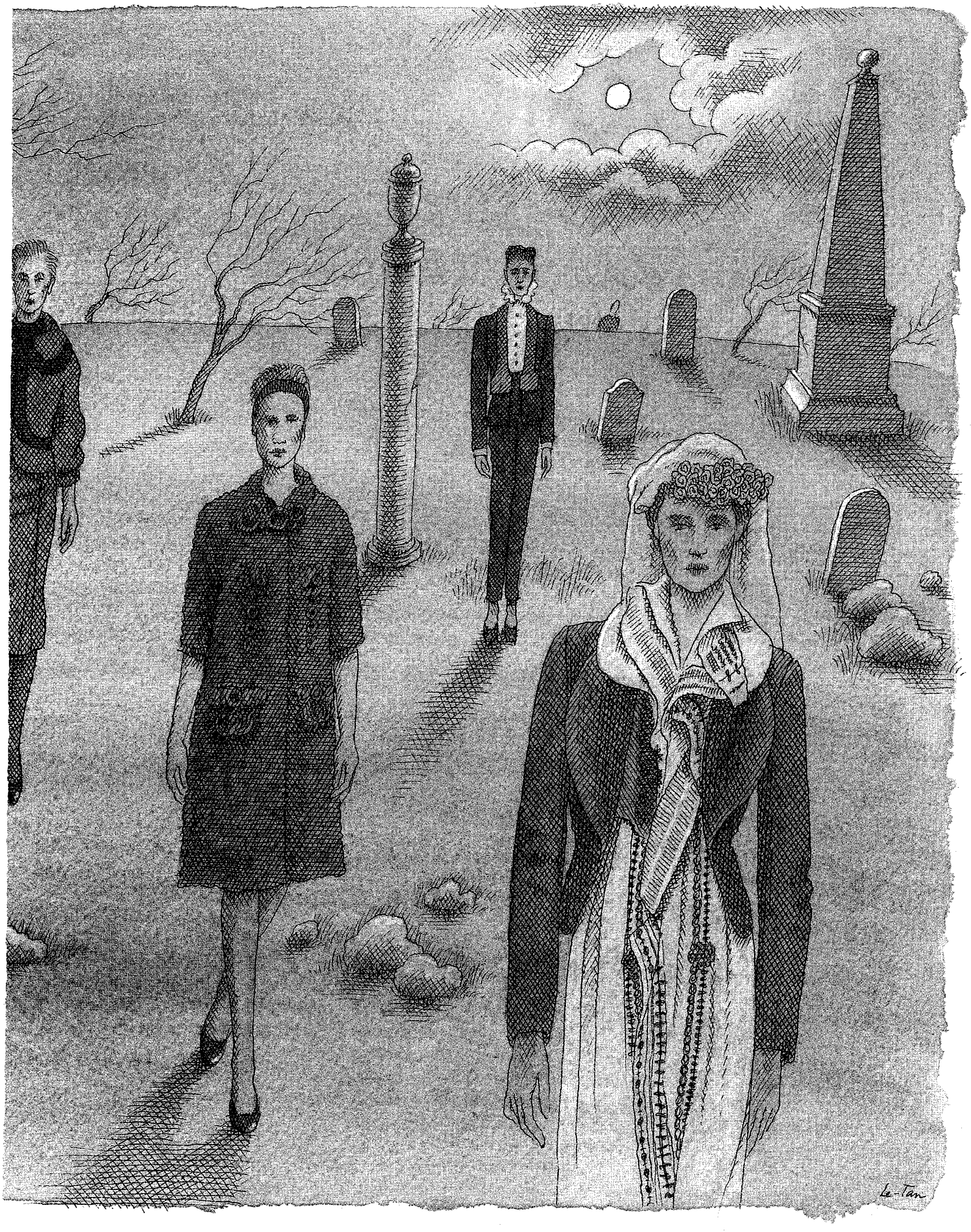
Last comes Linda Lopton, a plus-size superbabe,
Who loved with all her hefty heart a tiny man named Gabe.
When they were in the bedroom, and working out their passion,
Small Gabe was always well concealed beneath large Linda's thrashing.
One morning après-whoopie, après-wildest-night-of-risk,
Linda woke a widow, and Gabe a flattened disk.

Don't you wish that you were they, and they were more like you?
And deeply wishing they were you was all that they could do?
That they were doing dishes while you flew from place to place,
Stunning passing pretty boys with just your perfect face?
Stopping traffic, drawing stares, exulting in your beauty,
Instead of writing checks that bounce and doing jury duty?

But then again the truth is that soon all perfection fades—
What's high and firm descends and spreads, what's taut and hip degrades.
So walk into the twilight, dear, as death is growing nearer,
With calm aplomb, and peace anon, avoiding every mirror.
For when we get to Heaven, with delight I know we'll find
We all are supermodels, with angelic fine behinds.

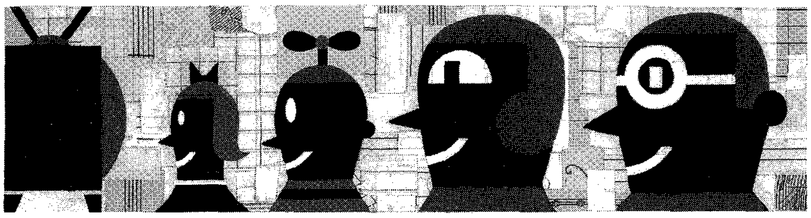


This season, a number of designers—from left to righ



nya Watanabe, Louis Vuitton, Prada, Yves Saint Laurent, and Comme des Garçons—have featured dark, shadowy silhouettes.

THE CRITICS



BOOKS

STAND BY YOUR MAN

The strange liaison of Sartre and Beauvoir.

BY LOUIS MENAND

Jean-Paul Sartre preferred the company of women. As one would expect of the great advocate of transparency, he discussed his reasons frankly. "First of all, there is the physical element. There are of course ugly women, but I prefer those who are pretty," he explained in an interview for the documentary "Sartre by Himself." "Then, there is the fact that they're oppressed, so they seldom bore you with shop talk. . . . I enjoy being with a woman because I'm bored out of my mind when I have to converse in the realm of ideas." "Sartre by Himself" was filmed in 1972, when Sartre was sixty-six; his interviewers were loyal associates from the journal he founded after the war, *Les Temps Modernes*. None of them encouraged him to expand on the topic, since Simone de Beauvoir was present, and everyone in the room understood that the legend of their relationship was in her keeping. But everyone in the room also knew that Sartre liked the company of women because he devoted much of his time to the business of seducing them.

The nature of Sartre and Beauvoir's partnership was never a secret to their friends, and it was not a secret to the public, either, after they were abruptly launched into celebrity, in 1945. They were famous as a couple with independent lives, who met in cafés, where they wrote their books and saw their friends at separate tables, and were free to enjoy other relationships, but who maintained a kind of soul marriage. Their liaison was part of the mystique of existentialism, and it was extensively documented and coolly defended in Beauvoir's four volumes of memoirs, all of them extremely popular in France: "Memoirs of a Dutiful Daughter" (1958), "The Prime of Life" (1960), "Force of Circumstance" (1963), and "All Said and Done" (1972). Beauvoir and Sartre had no interest in varnishing the facts out of respect for bourgeois notions of decency. Disrespect for bourgeois notions of decency was precisely the point.

Sartre and Beauvoir had met in Paris in 1929, when he was twenty-four, she was twenty-one, and both were studying for the *agrégation*, the competitive examination for a career in the French school system. Beauvoir was a handsome and stylish woman, and she had a boyfriend, René Maheu. (It was Maheu who gave her her permanent nickname, *le Castor*—the Beaver.) But she fell in love with Sartre, once she got over the physical impression he made. Sartre was about five feet tall, and he had lost almost all the sight in his right eye when he was three; he dressed in oversized clothes, with no sense of fashion; his skin and teeth suggested an indifference to hygiene. He had the kind of aggressive male ugliness that can be charismatic, and he wisely refrained from disguising it. He simply ignored his body. He was also smart, generous, agreeable, ambitious, ardent, and very funny. He liked to drink and talk all night, and so did she.

Sartre had been engaged, though the engagement was broken off after he failed his first attempt at the *agrégation;* but he and Beauvoir decided that their love did not require marriage for its consummation. "The comradeship that welded our lives together made a superfluous mockery of any other bond we might have forged for ourselves," Beauvoir explained in "The Prime of Life":

> One single aim fired us, the urge to embrace all experience, and to bear witness concerning it. At times this meant that we had to follow diverse paths—though without concealing even the least of our discoveries from one another. When we were together we bent our wills so firmly to the requirements of this common task that even at the moment of parting we still thought as one. That which bound us freed us; and in this freedom we found ourselves bound as closely as possible.

Sartre proposed a "pact": they could have affairs, but they were required to tell each other everything. As he put it to Beauvoir: "What *we* have is an *essential* love; but it is a good idea for us also to experience *contingent* love affairs." Beauvoir's whole life to that point had been an effort to escape from the culture of her family. Her mother had been educated in a convent; her father was a conservative Paris lawyer of diminished means who, though he was proud of his daughter's mind, discouraged her interest in philosophy, and would probably have discouraged her pursuit of any career if he had been able to provide her with a dowry. So she was excited by the affront to conventional standards of domesticity that Sartre's arrangement posed. She also had a high opinion of Sartre's brilliance as a philosopher. An argument based on terms like "essence" and "contingency" worked as well on her as a diamond ring. She saw (before he did, but in some ways she was cannier than he was) that the pact bound to her for life a man whom she knew would never be faithful. It closed the normal exit.

As matters worked out, the pact meant that Beauvoir not only discussed with Sartre his interest in other women; she often formed intimate friendships with the women herself. At first, she was distressed to discover that she sometimes felt jealous. Sartre advised her that

Sartre and Beauvoir in Sweden, in 1947. The world-famous philosopher of freedom had recently moved in with his mother.

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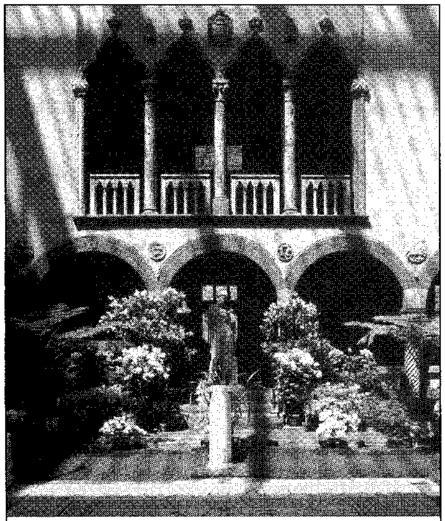

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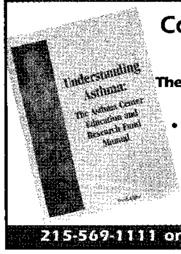

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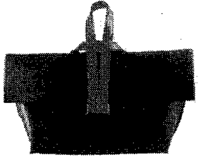

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jealousy, like all passions, is an enemy of freedom: it controls you, and you should be controlling it. Sartre soon stopped sleeping with her, and she had her own serious affairs, notably with Nelson Algren, a transatlantic relationship that lasted from 1947 to 1951, and Claude Lanzmann, with whom she lived from 1952 to 1959; she wrote openly about her relations with both men in "Force of Circumstance." But she remained committed to Sartre and to the pact; and the relationship, with its carrousel of changing partners and café tables, lasted fifty-one years.

Beauvoir never pretended that her memoirs told the whole story. "There are many things which I firmly intend to leave in obscurity," she warned in "The Prime of Life." Though she strategically employed pseudonyms in the memoirs, enough was revealed, and enough suggested in her romans à clef "She Came to Stay" (1943) and "The Mandarins" (1954), to satisfy most curiosities. Sartre died, after a prolonged debilitation, in 1980. A year later, in a book called "Adieux: A Farewell to Sartre," Beauvoir published a series of "conversations" with Sartre that she had conducted in 1974, in which she guided him through philosophically tinged musings on his affairs. Even for existentialists, it was painful reading:

DE BEAUVOIR: Were you ever attracted by an ugly woman?

SARTRE: Truly and wholly ugly, no, never.

DE BEAUVOIR: It could even be said that all the women you were fond of were either distinctly pretty or at least very attractive and full of charm.

SARTRE: Yes, in our relations I liked a woman to be pretty because it was a way of developing my sensibility. These were irrational values—beauty, charm, and so on. Or rational, if you like, since you can provide an interpretation, a rational explanation. But when you love a person's charm you love something that is irrational, even though ideas and concepts do explain charm at a more intense degree.

DE BEAUVOIR: Were there not women you found attractive for reasons other than strictly feminine qualities—strength of character, something intellectual and mental, rather than something wholly to do with charm and femininity? There are two I'm thinking about.

And so on. It was hard to say whether the conversation was more humiliating for her or for him, with his boorishness so plainly on display. Still, it was possible to stick to the no-fault view: these were consenting adults. Their erotic lives were no one's concern but their own.

That view soon lost tenability. Three years after Sartre's death, Beauvoir published a collection of his letters to her, in which he described in detail his activities in bed, but she edited them to conceal identities. She died in 1986; in 1990, her executrix, Sylvie Le Bon de Beauvoir, published Beauvoir's "Letters to Sartre." These were unedited—"Is it not, by now, preferable to tell all in order to tell the truth?" Le Bon de Beauvoir wrote in the preface—and they shocked many people. The revelation was not the promiscuity; it was the hypocrisy. In interviews, Beauvoir had flatly denied having had sexual relations with women; in the letters, she regularly described, for Sartre, her nights in bed with women. The most appalling discovery, for many readers, was what "telling each other everything" really meant. The correspondence was filled with catty and disparaging remarks about the people Beauvoir and Sartre were either sleeping with or trying to sleep with, even though, when they were with those people, they radiated interest and affection. Sartre, in particular, was always speaking to women of his love and devotion, his inability to live without them—every banality of popular romance. Words constituted his principal means of seduction: his physical approaches were on the order of groping in restaurants and grabbing kisses in taxis. With the publication of "Letters to Sartre," it was clear that, privately, he and Beauvoir held most of the people in their lives in varying degrees of contempt. They enjoyed, especially, recounting to each other the lies they were telling.

Some of those whose names appeared in "Letters to Sartre" were alive in 1990, and the book opened mouths that, for various reasons, had remained shut while Sartre and Beauvoir were alive. The chatter has not stopped, which means that Hazel Rowley's new book, "Tête-à-Tête: Simone de Beauvoir and Jean-Paul Sartre" (HarperCollins; $26.95), is basically an update on a breaking story. Sartre and Beauvoir were prolific letter writers, and most of their correspondence remains under the control of their estates. Le Bon de Beauvoir allowed Rowley to see many of the unpublished letters in her possession; one of Sartre's longtime mistresses, Michelle Vian, let her leaf through her collection. But Sartre's executrix, Arlette Elkaïm, did not respond to inquiries. Rowley interviewed Lanzmann, but he did not show her his letters from Beauvoir. She read the letters Sartre wrote to his Russian lover Lena Zonina between 1962 and 1967, though Elkaïm will not permit them to be published. Rowley is able to tell a fuller version of a story that has been written many times, but it is probably still some distance short of complete. (She also includes in the book—it sounds like a Woody Allen joke—a photograph of Beauvoir in the nude.) It seems fair to say that, in a manner consistent with an open-minded lack of prudery, Rowley is horrified by the behavior she describes. Readers looking for a friendlier spin can consult the pages on Sartre's love life in Bernard-Henri Lévy's gigantic "Sartre: The Philosopher of the Twentieth Century" (2000), but even Lévy, a delightfully unabashed hero-worshipper and special pleader *par excellence*, is reduced to complaining that what's really disgusting is everyone's obsession with the subject. That may be true, but it is not much of an argument.

Sartre and Beauvoir liked to refer to their entourage as "the Family," and the recurring feature of their affairs is a kind of play incest. Their customary method was to adopt a very young woman as a protégée—to take her to movies and cafés, travel with her, help her with her education and career, support her financially. (Sartre wrote most

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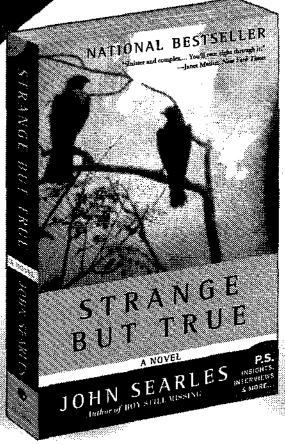

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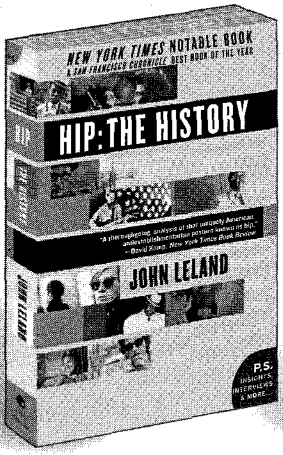

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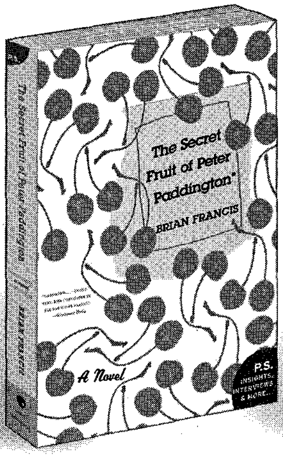

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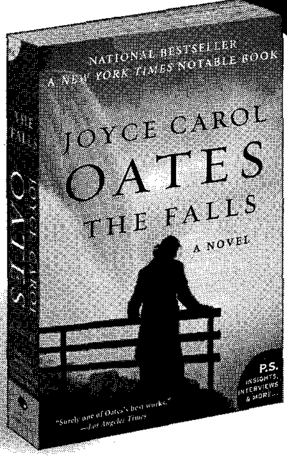

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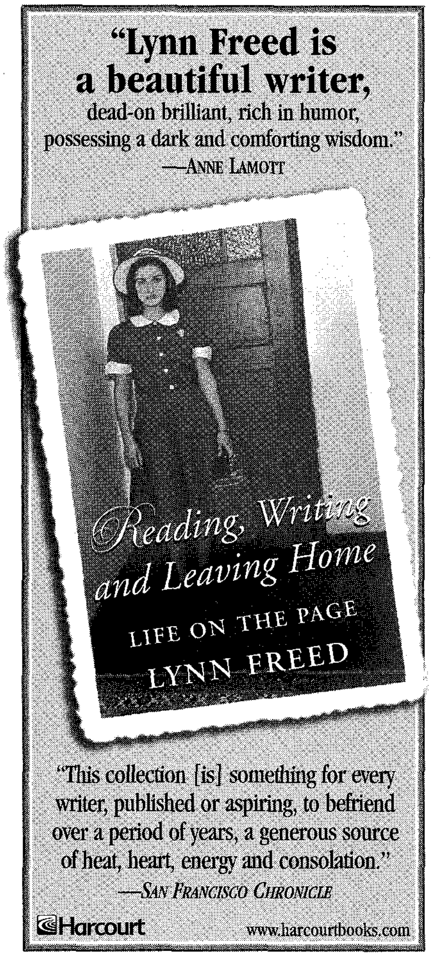

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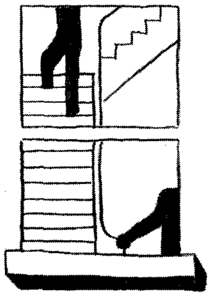
of his plays in part to give women he was sleeping with something to do: they could be actresses.) For Sartre and Beauvoir, the feeling that they were, in effect, sleeping with their own children must, as with most taboos, have juiced up the erotic fun.

In 1933, when she was teaching in Rouen, Beauvoir had a seventeen-year-old student named Olga Kosakiewicz, a daughter of a Russian émigré who had been dispossessed by the Revolution. Olga was attractive, dreamy, unhappy; Beauvoir struck up a friendship, and they began to see each other outside of school. In the summer of 1935, Beauvoir proposed that Olga should put herself under the protection of her and Sartre, who would pay her way and be responsible for her education, and a few months later Olga moved into a room in the Hôtel du Petit Mouton, where Beauvoir was living, and they began an affair. Sartre became infatuated with Olga and spent two years attempting to seduce her. He failed, but in 1937 he met her sister, Wanda, also beautiful, and even more at sea, and he managed, after two more years, to sleep with her. The day of his triumph, he left her lying in bed, "all pure and tragic, declaring herself tired and having hated me for a good forty-five minutes," in order to rush out to a café and write Beauvoir with the news. ("She Came to Stay" is an account of the Sartre-Beauvoir-Olga affair that, from all the evidence, is only lightly fictionalized—except that at the end of the novel the Beauvoir character murders the Olga character. Beauvoir dedicated the book to Olga.)



Bianca Bienenfeld was the daughter of Jewish refugees from Poland. She became Beauvoir's student in 1938, when she was sixteen. The two went on a hiking trip at the end of the school year and began an affair. Beauvoir introduced Bianca to Sartre, and he began wooing her. "I was very attracted by his charm, spirit, kindness, and intelligence," Bienenfeld wrote in her memoir, "A Disgraceful Affair," which was published in France in 1993. (The French title, "Mémoires d'une Jeune Fille Dérangée," is a takeoff on the title of the first volume of Beauvoir's memoirs, "Mémoires d'une Jeune Fille Rangée.") "Just as a waiter plays the role of a waiter," she wrote, "Sartre played to perfection the role of a man in love." (This, too, is an allusion with a sting: it refers to a famous passage in Sartre's "Being and Nothingness," which he began working on around the time he was courting Bienenfeld, about the bad faith of the waiter, who lets himself be defined by the role society has given him.) Sartre eventually persuaded Bienenfeld, who had never slept with a man, to accompany him to a hotel, where, he suavely confided to her, he had taken another girl's virginity the day before. The first encounter was unpleasant: Sartre had a mildly sadistic attitude toward sex. He took enormous satisfaction in the conquest but little pleasure in the sex (and so he usually terminated the physical part of his affairs coldly and quickly). Still, he and Bianca became lovers, and Sartre and Beauvoir kept up the pretense that they were both in love with her until they had had enough, and then, prompted by Beauvoir, Sartre wrote a letter announcing the end of the affair.

Three months later, the Germans arrived in Paris. Bienenfeld barely escaped capture during the Occupation; her grandfather and an aunt died in the camps. She says that Sartre and Beauvoir never inquired about her or tried to find her during the war. She reunited with Beauvoir in 1945, and saw her once a month until Beauvoir's death. She had no idea that Beauvoir had connived with Sartre to drop her, or that both of them regarded her as a shallow nuisance, until she read about herself in "Letters to Sartre." "Their perversity was carefully concealed beneath Sartre's meek and mild exterior and the Beaver's serious and austere appearance," she wrote in "A Disgraceful Affair." "In fact, they were acting out a commonplace version of 'Dangerous Liaisons.'"

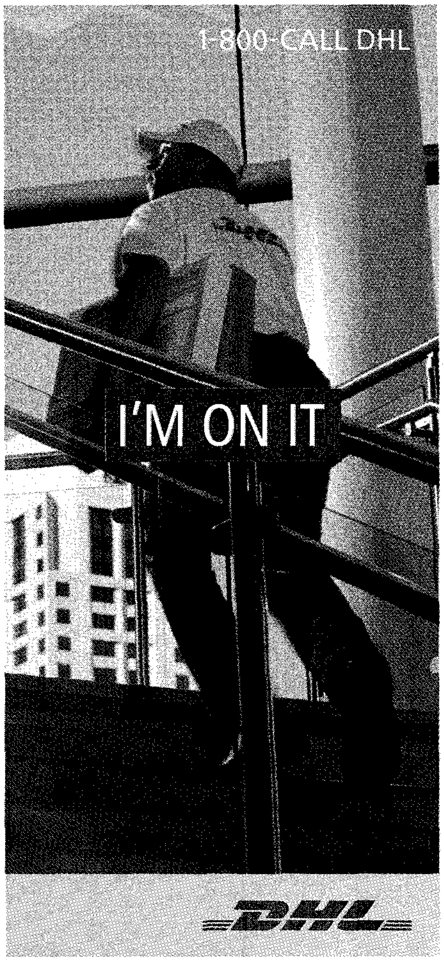
Nathalie Sorokine, another student of Beauvoir's, was also the child of Russian émigrés. She and Beauvoir became sexually involved while Beauvoir was still having her affair with Bienenfeld. ("I've a very keen taste for her body," Beauvoir wrote to Sartre.) Sorokine, too, slept with Sartre and, with Beauvoir's encouragement, with another lover of Beauvoir's, Jacques-Laurent Bost. (This is where you start to need a scorecard: Bost was Olga Kosakiewicz's boyfriend when Beauvoir seduced him; he later married Olga, but continued, in secret, his affair with Beauvoir, who remained Olga's intimate friend.)

The ideal form for a Sartre and Beauvoir *ménage* was the triangle. If they couldn't fashion one, they contrived a simulation: when Sartre couldn't get Olga to sleep with him, he seduced her sister. Later on, their affairs followed a copycat pattern. In 1945, Sartre went, alone, to the United States, where he met and began an affair with Dolores Vanetti, a Frenchwoman who had moved to the United States during the war and was married to an American doctor. Sartre proposed marriage (a detail he neglected to share with Beauvoir), and, since Vanetti was emphatically not interested in *à-trois* arrangements, Beauvoir felt threatened. In 1947, Beauvoir went, alone, to the United States, where she met and began an affair with Nelson Algren. (She never told Algren about Sartre's affair with Vanetti; he learned about it by reading "Force of Circumstance.") In 1952, when she was forty-four, Beauvoir began her affair with Lanzmann, who was twenty-seven. In 1953, Sartre began an affair with Lanzmann's sister, Evelyne. She was twenty-three.

Biographers have trouble getting the complete story because there is contentiousness between the estates, and this, too, is a consequence of the pact. Sartre met Arlette Elkaïm in 1956. She was a French Algerian, nineteen years old, who had fled to Paris after her mother committed suicide. Sartre took her in, and they had a brief affair. In 1965, he adopted her as his daughter. Since Beauvoir had no legal relationship to Sartre, and since Sartre did not make a will, Elkaïm was his sole heir. Beauvoir, though, was not far behind. In 1960, she met Sylvie Le Bon, a seventeen-year-old student. Rowley suspects that they were lovers, though she reports that Le Bon "talks about this subject . . . with vagueness and ambiguity." (Le Bon says that the relationship was "carnal but not sexual," which sounds a little Clintonesque.) After Sartre died, Beauvoir adopted Le Bon, who now controls access to Beauvoir's writings, as Elkaïm controls access to Sartre's.

What makes the Existentialist Family different from other twentieth-century counter-domesticities—Bloomsbury, for example, which had its own quasi-incestuous, partner-swapping patterns of intimacy—is the asymmetry of most of the pairings. Sartre's novels and plays earned him a great deal of money after the war, but he spent virtually none of it on himself (a lifelong habit). In 1946, at the peak of his celebrity as the philosopher of freedom and authenticity, he moved in with his mother. He used most of his income to support friends and current and former mistresses. He described the women he was attracted to as "drowning women," women whose lives were damaged or insecure—which, of course, was why they offered the devotion he demanded. They were all a little desperate, and Sartre was the leading intellectual in a culture that treats its intellectuals like pop stars. He set his women up in apartments within ten minutes of his own and, every week, made what he called his "medical rounds." Each woman had specified hours allotted to spend with him. The women almost never saw each other; in many cases, they never knew about each other. But they all knew about Beauvoir, and Beauvoir was Sartre's standing excuse: the Beaver wouldn't like it; he had to spend more time with the Beaver.

And the Beaver is the great mystery at the center of the whole system. What explains her? One theory is plainly wrong. That is the theory that her relationship with Sartre was a post-patriarchal partnership of equals, combining genuine mutuality with genuine autonomy, and rejecting the superstitious equation of sexual fidelity with commitment—in less pretentious terms, an open marriage. But it is clear now that Sartre and Beauvoir did not simply have a long-term relationship supplemented by independent affairs with other people. The affairs with other people formed the very basis of their relationship. The swapping and the sharing and the mimicking, the memoir- and novel-writing, right down to the interviews and the published letters and the duelling estates, was the stuff and sub-



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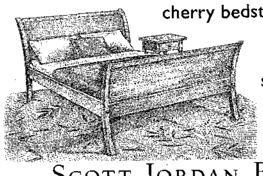

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stance of their "marriage." This was how they slept with each other after they stopped sleeping with each other. The third parties were, in effect, prostheses, marital aids, and, when they discovered how they were being used, they reacted, like Bianca Bienenfeld, with the fury of the betrayed. Algren never forgave Beauvoir for concealing Sartre's affair with Vanetti from him: when her books appeared in English translation, he reviewed them, and they are reviews from hell.

Two theories are left. One, a respectable but minority view among Beauvoir scholars, is that she was the engineer of the whole pact. It was Beauvoir who rejected marriage, not Sartre, who felt lucky to have her on any terms; and it was Beauvoir who was the dominant partner intellectually, not, as she always publicly insisted, the other way around. The view has some evidentiary support. Beauvoir was far more passionate sexually and complex emotionally than Sartre, and she was also, arguably, the stronger, if less creative, mind. Deirdre Bair, in her 1990 biography of Beauvoir, reported that the jury for the *agrégation*, in 1929, debated whether to award first place in the competition to Sartre or Beauvoir. They gave it to Sartre—he was, after all, a man, and it was his second try—but they agreed that Beauvoir was the real philosopher. She was the youngest *agrégée* in French history. A close comparison of their books by no means supports the notion that her thought was parasitic on his. But the theory that Beauvoir tolerated the system because it was the system she created founders on "The Second Sex."

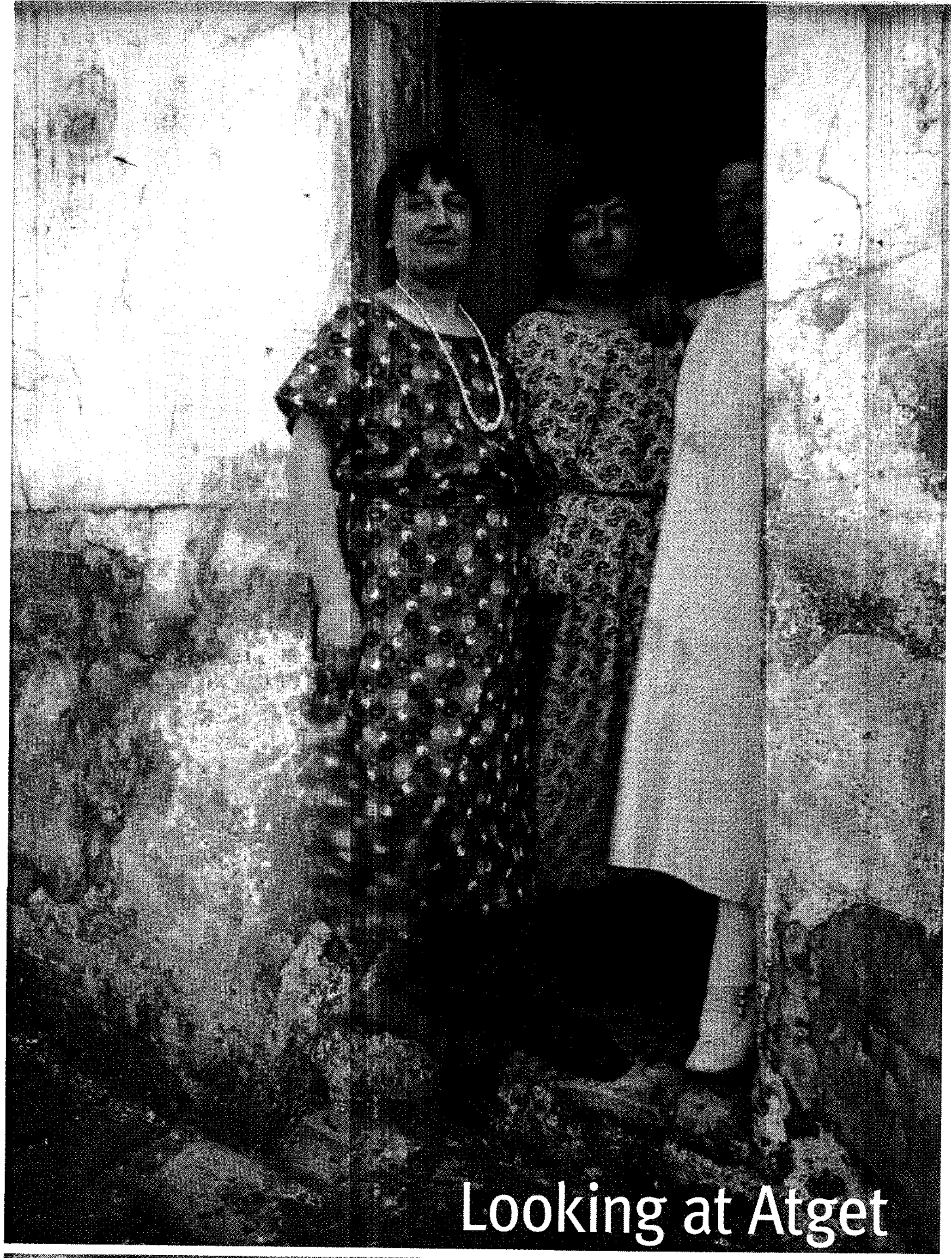
Beauvoir wrote her great book in two years, a fast pace for her. She started it while Sartre was deeply involved with Vanetti, and it was published in 1949. The edge on its analysis still gleams. (The English translation, made in 1952, is badly misleading, as a number of scholars, notably Margaret Simons and Toril Moi, have pointed out—an abridgment filled with mistakes that distort and sometimes invert Beauvoir's meaning. According to Moi, proposals to produce a new translation have been ignored by Beauvoir's American and French publishers.) The book's final chapter, "The Independent Woman," arguing that only economic self-sufficiency can release women from subordination, was one of the inspirational texts for the women's movement of the nineteen-sixties and seventies. But you can no longer read it without thinking of Olga and Wanda, Arlette and Michelle—the women Sartre supported, who never had independent careers, and who knew that they were allowed access to Sartre only as long as they were "pretty" and never bored him by talking "in the realm of ideas." A *little* intellectual pretension, the flattering kind shown by a young admirer, was titillating, of course. It was necessary to get the attention of the great man, who was not disappointed, because he was not surprised, by its limitations. "If a woman has false ideas," Beauvoir writes in "The Second Sex,"

> if she is not very intelligent, clear-sighted, or courageous, a man does not hold her responsible: she is the victim, he thinks—and often with reason—of her situation. He dreams of what she might have been, of what she perhaps will be: she can be credited with any possibilities, because she *is* nothing in particular. This vacancy is what makes the lover weary of her quickly; but it is the source of the mystery, the charm, that seduces him and makes him inclined to feel an easy affection in the first place.

There is no more remorseless dissection of the situation of the successful man's mistress than "The Independent Woman," and, since Beauvoir always wrote out of her own experience, it is possible to imagine that chapter as a coded letter to Sartre, the evisceration that she could never deliver to his face.

If "The Second Sex" can't be squared with the life, we are reduced to the final, depressing theory that the pact was just the traditional sexist arrangement—in which the man sleeps around and the woman nobly "accepts" the situation—on philosophical stilts. Sartre was the classic womanizer, and Beauvoir was the classic enabler. In the beginning, the bisexuality was her way of showing the proper spirit. "I've a very keen taste for her body": who is speaking that sentence? The woman who wants it to be heard, or the man who wants to hear it? Later on, she had other men, but finding a man willing to enter a sexual intimacy without strings is not the most difficult thing in the world. (Algren turned out not to be one.) Beauvoir was formidable, but she was not made of ice. Though her affairs, for the most part, were love affairs, it is plain from almost every page she wrote that she would have given them all up if she could have had Sartre for herself alone. ♦

A Season of Discovery



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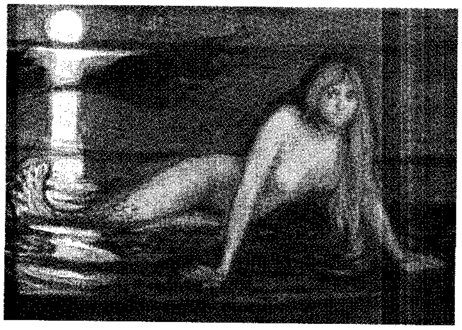

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From top: Eugène Atget, *Rue Asselin* (detail), 1924–1925 (negative), printed by Berenice Abbott c. 1930. Philadelphia Museum of Art: The Lynne and Harold Honickman Gift of the Julien Levy Collection, 2001. Edvard Munch, *Mermaid* (detail), 1896, Philadelphia Museum of Art: Partial and promised gift of anonymous donors, 2003.

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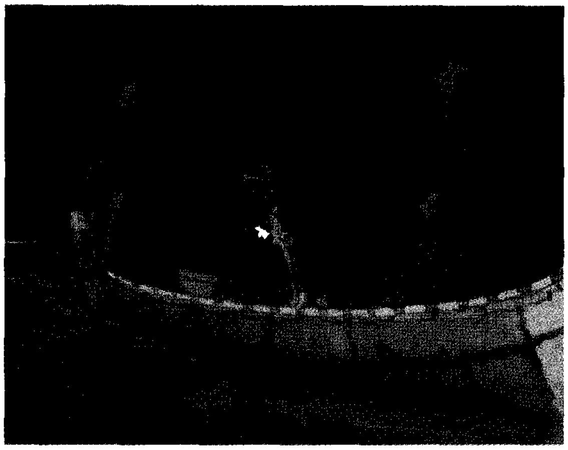

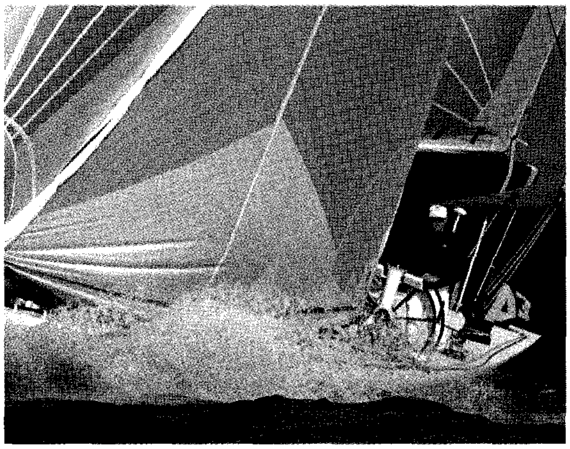

Frederic Remington, Evening on a Canadian Lake (detail), 1905. Oil on canvas. William I. Koch Collection.

William I. Koch at the helm of America³, San Diego, 1992. Copyright Daniel Forster/America³.

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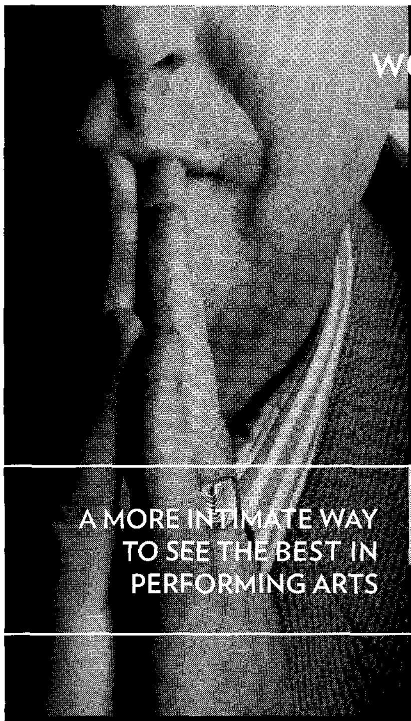

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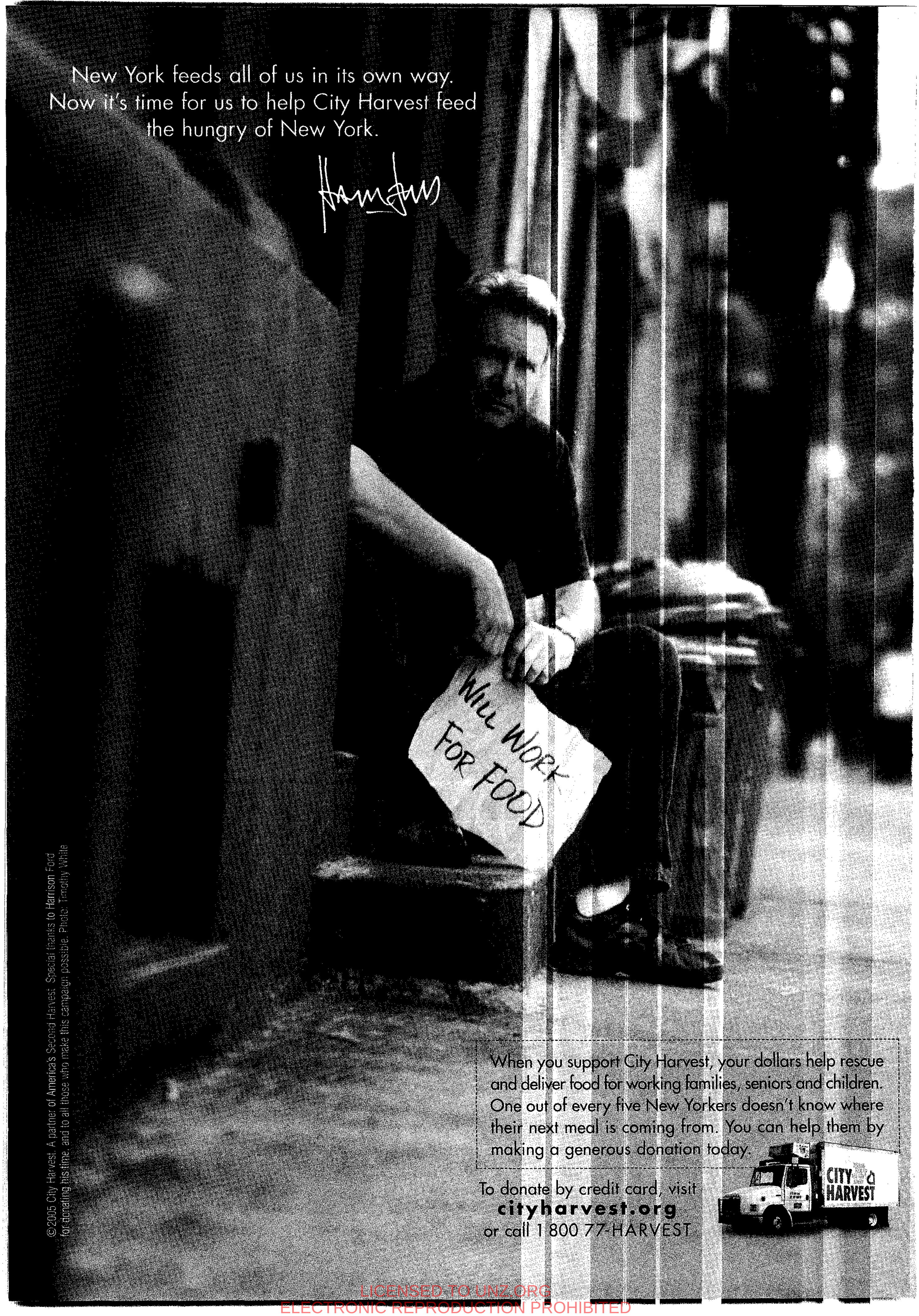

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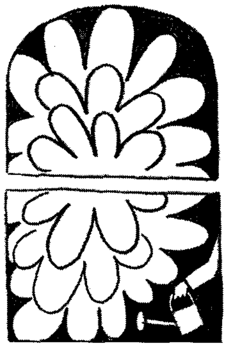
BRIEFLY NOTED

The Diviners, *by Rick Moody (Little, Brown; $25.95).* Moody's latest novel revolves around a proposed mini-series epic that follows generations of a tribe of diviners, from the conquests of the Mongols to the founding of Las Vegas. Unbeknown to the agents and studio executives scrambling for the rights, there's no script, only a synopsis concocted by an office assistant and her lover, a married action-movie star. Meanwhile, a producer's aging alcoholic mother disappears; an accountant embezzles thousands of dollars and goes on the lam; and a schizophrenic bike messenger is falsely accused of attempted murder. Moody's kinetic prose calls to mind Bruce Wagner's kaleidoscopic Hollywood novels, but it lacks Wagner's acerbity and airy humor. One major riff concerns a popular television show about a community of werewolves (and involves a wearisome recounting of camera angles). Moody's novel, like the high-production-value shows it refers to, has an earnest sententiousness that overshadows its well-crafted fluency.

Here Is Where We Meet, *by John Berger (Pantheon; $24).* It is not always easy to tell, in the work of John Berger, where fiction meets autobiography—or, for that matter, essay and meditation. His latest book takes the form of encounters the author has with characters from the past—Jorge Luis Borges, Rosa Luxemburg, mentors, tutors, and lovers—in cities across Europe, from Lisbon and Madrid to Geneva and Kraków. One by one, the apparitions turn up, artfully and reverentially sketched, before vanishing again with just the whisper of a message left behind. In Lisbon, city of trams and *azulejos*, Berger encounters the spirit of his long-departed mother and reflects, "Perhaps Lisbon is a special stopover for the dead, perhaps here the dead show themselves off more than in any other city."



Bait and Switch, *by Barbara Ehrenreich (Metropolitan; $24).* Several years ago, Ehrenreich, a veteran muckraker, went to work in a variety of low-paying jobs to expose the harsh plight of the working poor; the resulting book, "Nickel and Dimed," was an effective diatribe against the erosion of minimum wages and social safety nets. Here she goes incognito, under the cover of her maiden name (Alexander) and a lacklustre résumé, to find a white-collar job, preferably one with a title, benefits, and a minimum salary of fifty thousand a year. The idea was to worm into corporate America and expose the panicky insecurity of mid-level professionals in the downsized, outsourced New Economy. But, even after seemingly endless bouts of career-coaching sessions, networking events, and makeovers, the best offer "Barbara Alexander" gets is for a commission-only gig selling AFLAC medical insurance. It's hard to tell whether the flaw lies in American capitalism or in the invention of Barbara Alexander.

Faces of Science, *by Mariana Cook (Norton; $39.95).* Scientists are supposed to be skull-beneath-the-skin types, peering into telescopes or microscopes in order to glimpse the eternal nature of things. In these black-and-white portraits of some eighty eminent researchers, a photographer tries peering back. The result is a fascinating study of the gaze, albeit from a reverse angle. There's the archeologist with the arched, combable eyebrows, the neutrino guy with the in-on-the-cosmic-joke grin, the evolutionary biologist whose age-etched face emerges from the shadows as a play of silvery crescents, the superstring theorist with a bad-cop glower, the neuron whiz who looks like a bartender you'd spill your troubles to. The subjects have all contributed personal statements, and when you put those together you get a history of postwar science that's as immediate and unprettified as these portraits.

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BOOKS

MAMMY FOR THE MASSES

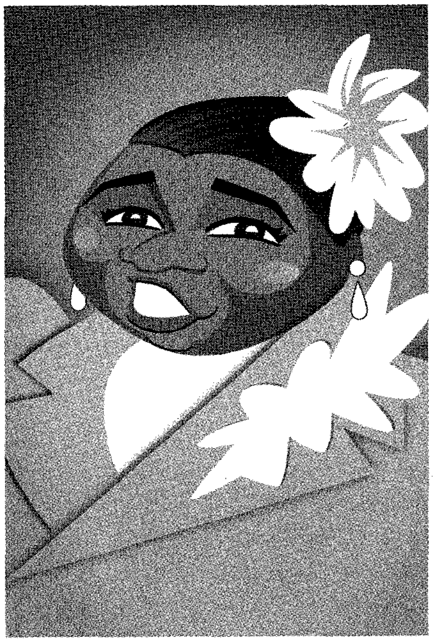
Hattie McDaniel worked as a maid, and played one on the screen.

BY HILTON ALS

We're in the last reels of a claustrophobically black-and-white world. The film: "Alice Adams," the director George Stevens's 1935 adaptation of Booth Tarkington's novel. Determined to marry up, Alice (Katharine Hepburn) has invited a potential beau, the well-heeled Arthur Russell (Fred MacMurray), to her modest home for supper. Also present are Alice's parents, who appear to be as dingy as the worn paper that covers the walls of the Adamses' furniture-stuffed rooms.

Desperate to disguise—but how?—her straitened circumstances, Alice tries to dress everything up for Arthur's delectation. Perfuming her banal chatter with French phrases, Alice makes catty reference to the family's "domestique," Malena Burns (Hattie McDaniel), who performs her duties with a kind of narcotized deliberateness. Short and rotund, Malena has dark-black skin that gleams with Vaseline and malice. When Alice's father—whose starched shirtfront keeps popping open—disgraces himself by dropping a Brussels sprout on the dining-room table, Malena scoops it up with a big spoon and carts it away in an even larger pan.

Before her death, in 1952, at the age of fifty-nine, McDaniel played a hundred or so saucy maids, slaves, and cooks, but her Malena stands apart—even from the role of Mammy, in "Gone with the Wind" (1939), for which she won a best-supporting-actress Oscar. (McDaniel was the first black actress to be so recognized; Whoopi Goldberg, half a century later, was the next.) Malena, with no more than two lines of speech (unlike most blacks in the movies of the era, she says "the" instead of "de"), chewing gum, her maid's cap drooping, could just as well be one of the peasants at the start of Brecht's "The Caucasian Chalk Circle": a little caustic, if not downright sour, dreaming of the land. Malena warns Mrs. Adams that serving a hot meal on such a hot night won't do; when she announces dinner, it is in a rough, booming voice; she opens the rusty French doors separating the kitchen from the dining room with the force of a graceless military assault. And when, in the middle of the meal, Alice "rings" for Malena, she removes the plates while Mr. Adams is in mid-slurp.



Hattie McDaniel

ROBERT RISKO

Still, McDaniel wouldn't have taken kindly to the Brechtian comparison. A creature formed by the mores of Hollywood, McDaniel played by its rules. During the HUAC years, for example, she and a number of other black actors in the Screen Actors Guild signed a public statement that denounced Communism but stated unequivocally that no black actor would be dumb enough to fall under Communism's sway. This gesture should be looked at in two ways. As a "race" woman, Mc-

THE NEW YORKER, NOV. 12, 1927
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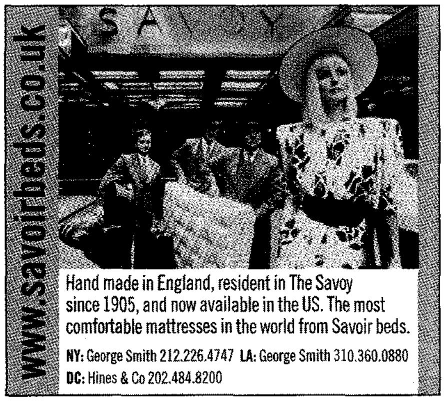

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Daniel had a certain proprietary interest in the blacks in the movie industry. By the time she signed that affidavit, she had become, for some, a glitzed-out benefactress, offering advice and gifts in equal measure to the less fortunate. On the other hand, McDaniel was a successful actress, who understood that her public image was all-important. She upheld the industry's values and put on a good clean show, gradually killing off the rebellious Malena character and becoming a near-parody of complacency and sweet agreeableness.

Judging from Jill Watts's "Hattie McDaniel: Black Ambition, White Hollywood" (Amistad; $27.95), it was a long trek to that Oscar podium. Born in Wichita, Kansas, on June 10, 1893, McDaniel was the youngest of Henry and Susan McDaniel's ten children. Henry and Susan had both been slaves. (Henry was the property of John McDaniel, a farmer in Lincoln County, Tennessee.) When the Emancipation Proclamation was signed, in 1863, Henry, who was around twenty-five, joined Company C, the 12th United States Colored Infantry Regiment, at the Elk River. In the service, McDaniel suffered frostbite in both legs. After a mortar exploded near his head, shattering his jaw, he lost hearing in his right ear and was plagued by headaches and by ringing in both ears for the rest of his life.

With Reconstruction, Southern blacks came to symbolize for many whites a bitter loss of economic power. In an effort to escape the racial epithets, random violence, and low wages, Henry and Susan went to Kansas, a more tolerant state. Eventually, they landed in Wichita, where blacks were able to own small businesses. But Henry's health problems and lack of money kept the McDaniels moving. In 1898, the family settled in Denver, Colorado, where romantics mined for gold, and sometimes struck it rich.

"I knew that I could sing and dance," Hattie McDaniel once recalled. "I was doing it so much that my mother would give me a nickel sometimes to stop." As a Christian, Susan disapproved of show business, but Hattie had a champion: her brother Otis, who was twelve years older. Like many black children whose parents had come of age in what James Baldwin called "the old country," Otis had an immigrant's grit. A performer and a nascent impresario, he emulated the legendary black entertainer Bert Williams, who was among the first blacks to be featured in white vaudeville. When Williams did the cakewalk, his infectious charm helped make the dance a national fad. (Like the Charleston of the nineteen-twenties, the cakewalk was invented by blacks to parody the white styles of dance.) In 1909, Otis wrote "Champion of the Freedman," a satire of the Back to Africa Movement and other post-Civil War emigration plans, with Hattie playing the daughter of an investor in an African repatriation scheme who "had more money than sense." A Colorado reviewer said that the play "drew a good house," and was performed "to the satisfaction of all present." Shortly after "Champion of the Freedman" was staged, the fifteen-year-old Hattie quit high school, while Otis and another brother, Sam, moved to Kansas City, Missouri, where they established the McDaniel Brothers stock company. Hattie appeared with her brothers' troupe from time to time but also started to build a reputation on her own, as a "singing-comedienne" who organized minstrels, played Mammy in a head rag, and sang in blackface in front of Denver's black population at church gatherings, socials, and tent shows. But McDaniel couldn't make a living just from shucking and jiving, and was forced to work as a domestic.

In the feisty Mammy, McDaniel had an instantly recognizable commodity. But, like many female performers, she needed a man to sell it. In Denver, she met the composer and musician George Morrison, the husband of a friend. Together they formed an act, and, in the summer of 1924, they were booked on the mostly white, second-tier Pantages circuit, touring the Midwest and the West Coast. According to Watts, the act opened with a song from "Pagliacci." Then McDaniel, introduced as "the female Bert Williams," came out, and alternated "comedic banter with blues songs and dynamic dance numbers."

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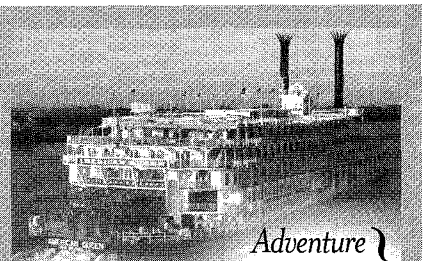

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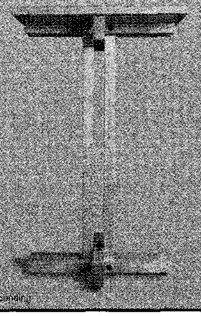

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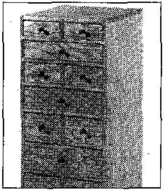

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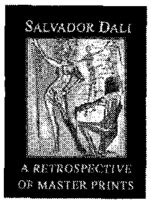

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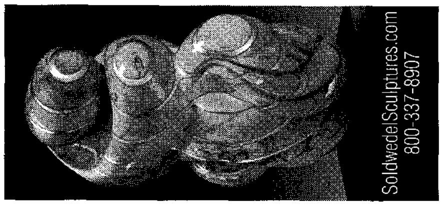

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But fame continued to elude McDaniel, and by May of 1925 she was back in Denver, once again supporting herself by fluffing sheets and folding towels. In the ensuing years, she moved to Chicago and continued to go on the road when she could, but the demand for vaudeville was dying. People wanted fantasy on a larger scale: they wanted movies. The Depression was encroaching. McDaniel had been twice married—first to a pianist and next to a laborer and bigamist. Her parents had both died. Meanwhile, her brother Sam was prospering in Los Angeles, having secured work as a featured actor on the "Optimistic Do-Nuts," a weekly radio revue. (He went on to have a fairly successful movie career as well.) In 1931, Hattie set out for the Coast.

Watts teaches history and film studies at the California State University, San Marcos, and has written biographies of Mae West and Father Divine. Although her treatment of McDaniel's life is somewhat awkwardly written and academic—more a thesis than a biography—she has done thorough research. (A broader look at blacks in the early days of Hollywood can be found in Thomas Cripps's masterly 1977 study, "Slow Fade to Black: The Negro in American Film, 1900-1942," and Donald Bogle's 1973 "Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies, and Bucks: An Interpretive History of Blacks in American Films.") The most interesting character to emerge from Watts's investigation of McDaniel's time in Hollywood is Charles Butler. One of the few blacks working behind the scenes in Hollywood, Butler had been a casting director since 1926, when the Central Casting Corporation—which was overseen by the Motion Pictures Producers Association—hired him to scout for black actors in films. Sometimes, for a crowd scene, he would gather blacks from Central Avenue, in South Central, the black area of Los Angeles where McDaniel settled shortly after her arrival. Black actors grumbled about Butler's close ties to, and seeming identification with, the white power structure that perpetuated the stereotypes they were forced to play. That didn't stop McDaniel from presenting herself to Butler as an affable, hardworking younger sister who needed his advice and protection.

McDaniel was a type that Butler could cast: as a servant. (She sometimes added padding, so that she appeared even doughier.) Her starting salary was seven dollars and fifty cents a day, an income that she supplemented with work as a laundress, and, later, with guest appearances on the "Optimistic Do-Nuts." Soon she was given a radio show of her own, called "Hi Hat Hattie and Her Boys," where she sang and told jokes. In 1934, John Ford hired McDaniel to play a maid, Dilsey, in a Will Rogers vehicle, "Judge Priest." She was directed to be sassy, perhaps in an effort to draw out the low-key Rogers. The movie generated McDaniel's first mainstream press. The gossip columnist Louella Parsons wrote, "There is a colored woman, Hattie McDaniel, who sings Negro spirituals as I have seldom heard them sung. Rogers himself joins in and you'll love it." By the mid-nineteen-thirties, McDaniel was finally able to support herself solely through her screen work, and it was then that she delivered what is probably her best remembered punch line: "I would rather make seven hundred dollars a week playing a maid than be one."

McDaniel was the Mammy everyone could love. And as she flourished she returned the affection. She bought a grand house in West Adams—the singer Lena Horne recalled that it had "the best of everything"—and, at Christmas, filled it with gifts for poor black children. (She never had any children of her own.) She also took out ads in white publications, counting her blessings. Her good will toward the industry culminated in her Oscar for the film adaptation of Margaret Mitchell's "Gone with the Wind." George Cukor, the film's first director, hadn't wanted to cast her. Like Susan Myrick, a journalist and close friend of Mitchell's, whom the film's producer, David Selznick, had hired as a consultant on Southern culture and practices, Cukor believed that McDaniel lacked dignity. But Selznick prevailed, and McDaniel got the part.

Unlike the disgruntled New York-trained actress Butterfly McQueen, who also appeared in "Gone with the Wind," McDaniel courted Myrick. (McQueen once recalled in an interview that McDaniel told her she would never make it in Hollywood because she complained too much.) Myrick subsequently wrote of McDaniel in her column for the Macon *Telegraph*, "She says Yassum and No'm to me in a way that makes me mighty homesick for my Mary Brown back in Macon." McDaniel endeared herself to Clark Gable by enduring his practical jokes with a smile.

McDaniel managed to make Mammy a character and a characterization: she was a portrait of a time long past. It was not an image that appealed to everyone. When the film was released, Walter White, then the head of the N.A.A.C.P., protested its depiction of black life in the antebellum South. As a black, McDaniel was not allowed to attend the première, in Atlanta, though Martin Luther King, Jr., who was then nine years old, did. He was in the all-black chorus that sang in the movie theatre before the lights went down and the curtains went up on Tara.

Nonetheless, McDaniel accepted the Oscar tearfully, on behalf of herself and her "race," and set about to honor her newly signed contract with Selznick. Even as a celebrated actress, she was offered few meaningful roles; frustrated, she insisted on making personal appearances in Los Angeles theatres frequented by whites. In the shows she devised, she would don her Mammy costume, and sing "My Mammy," a song that Al Jolson had made famous. It was how she survived. In the 1985 documentary "Brown Sugar," Lena Horne recalls that when she arrived in Hollywood (she had a contract at Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer that specified she'd never play a maid) "the one person who was wonderful to me was Miss Hattie McDaniel, the great, great black star.... She said to me, 'I have worn two hats because I have a family who I have taken care of very beautifully.' And she said, 'I'm a fine black Mammy, but I am Hattie McDaniel in my house.... You've got two babies, and you gotta work.' She said, 'Just do what you have to do.'"

Often, for McDaniel, this meant alienating the black community. In 1946, she appeared as Aunt Tempy in Disney's partially animated feature "Song of the South." Even after Emancipation, Aunt Tempy, like the other slaves, is content to stay on the plantation. White said that the film was "a dangerously glorified picture of slavery." Some black theatres refused to show it. Writing in the *Times*, the film critic Bosley Crowther addressed Walt Disney directly: "The master and slave relation is so lovingly regarded in your yarn...one might almost imagine that you figure Abe Lincoln made a mistake.... Put down that mint julep, Mr. Disney. It doesn't become your youthful face." Despite the negative criticism, McDaniel defended the film. "The story of Uncle Remus...is a warm, moving tale of the creative genius of the Negro slave who brought understanding and happiness into the lives of all those he met," she said to the Chicago *Daily Tribune*. "To the entire countryside he stood for wisdom, kindness, and faith. He understood human nature, whether shrouded in a white or black skin."

Toward the end of her life, McDaniel told a white journalist, "Well, I've played everything but the harp." Nearly broke because of her largesse, she had to move out of her house. (She had been left by her third husband, a dodgy businessman, in 1945, and by her fourth, an interior designer who was probably gay, a few years after that.) Ill with breast cancer, but still uncomplaining, she retired to the industry-supported Motion Picture Country Home and Hospital. She was the first black to be so honored. ♦

CONSTABULARY NOTES FROM ALL OVER

From the Gloucester (Mass.) Daily Times.

A man drinking liquor in front of an adopted bird at an Essex Avenue home was the source of a domestic dispute reported around 9 p.m. Tuesday.

The man's live-in, ex-wife called police because he was drinking liquor in front of their bird—which she said he is forbidden to do because it makes their dog mad.

The ex-husband told police he drank a couple of nips in front of the bird but he didn't smoke his pipe in front of it. The woman agreed to return the bird to the shelter the next day. Police did not file any charges for the incident.

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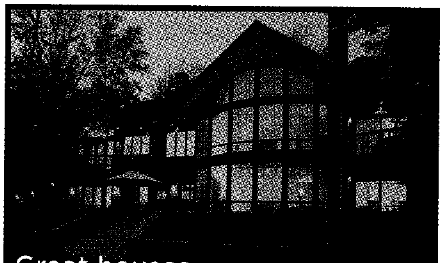

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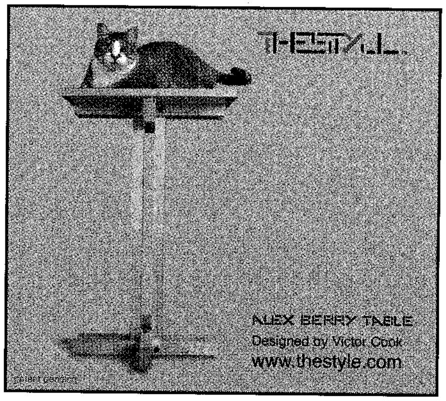

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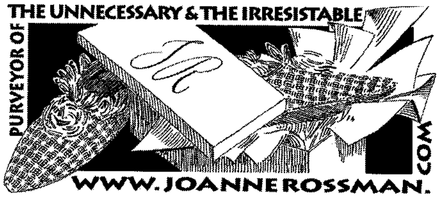

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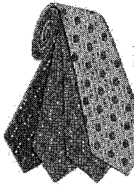

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MUSICAL EVENTS

SOUNDS FROM THE STUDIO

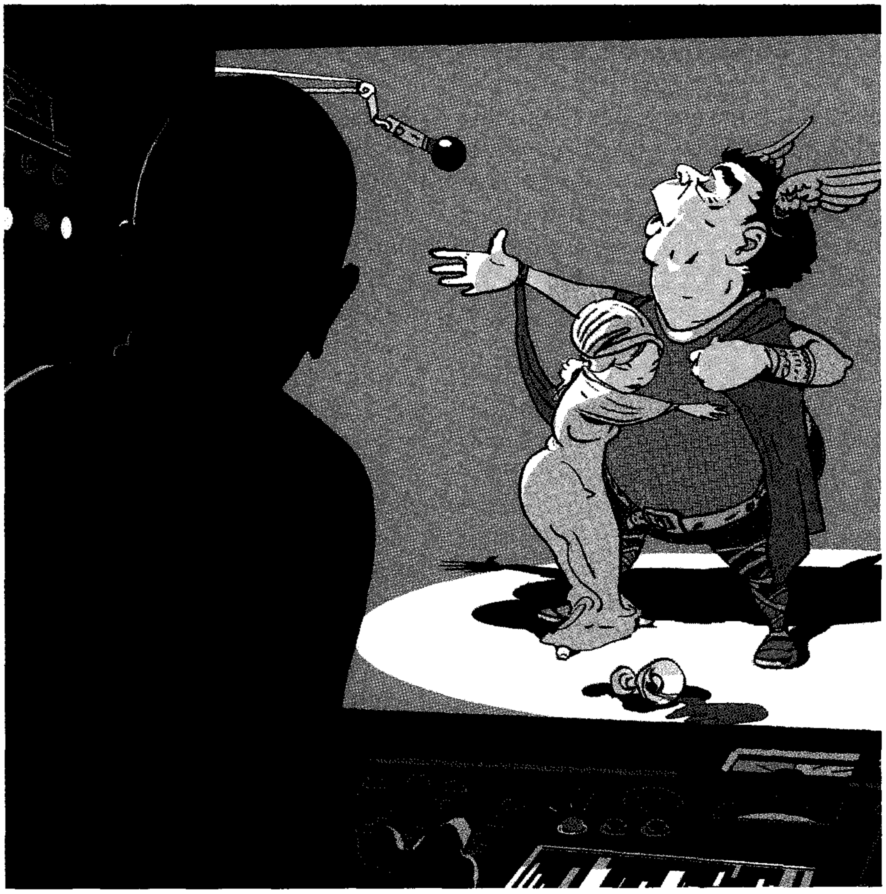
New recordings, from Wagner to Golijov.

BY ALEX ROSS

The EMI label's new version of "Tristan und Isolde," starring Plácido Domingo, has received weirdly apocalyptic advance publicity: it has been described as the final large-scale opera recording in history. "TWILIGHT OF THE CD GODS? A STUDIO 'TRISTAN' MAY BE THE LAST EVER," read a headline in the *Times*. With its opulent production values and showy cameos in minor roles—Ian Bostridge as the Shepherd; Rolando Villazón, Domingo's heir apparent in the Italian tenor repertory, as the Young Seaman—the set is a throwback to the golden age of the nineteen-fifties and sixties, when EMI summoned all-star casts to make generally unsurpassed recordings of "Don Giovanni," "The Magic Flute," "Fidelio," "Tosca," and, under the helm of Wilhelm Furtwängler, "Tristan." They don't make them like that anymore, but they are still making them. Virgin Classics, which is distributed by EMI, just issued a glamorous recording of Vivaldi's previously unknown "Bajazet." Decca is releasing a sumptuous studio recording of Richard Strauss's "Daphne," with Renée Fleming in the title role. There's even a competing "Tristan" out, a feisty budget effort from the Naxos label. Where did the end-of-everything story about EMI's "Tristan" get started? Probably in EMI's publicity department. Only in classical music would the alleged death of a genre be used to hype it.

What does seem to be dying out is the practice of spending a million or more dollars to make a studio recording of an opera that could just as easily have been taped live. And that's no cause for mourning. Modern technology allows engineers to preserve performances with a clarity that was impossible back in the fifties. Deutsche Grammophon, for example, captured a vital "Tristan" at the Vienna State Opera two years ago, with Thomas Moser and Deborah Voigt in the leads and Christian Thielemann conducting. In the case of Domingo's "Tristan," EMI resorted to the studio because Domingo has never sung this punishing role onstage. The increasingly ageless tenor, who is experiencing perhaps the longest Indian summer in vocal history, helped round up the money to realize his aim of singing Tristan from beginning to end. Don't be surprised if he soon repeats the feat with some other dream project, such as Verdi's "Simon Boccanegra." That one, presumably, will be marketed as really, truly, and absolutely the last.

Was it worth the million dollars? Is it worth your $50.98? Domingo pulls off some amazing feats of interpretation in the third act: one line after another is given a heartrending spin. Elsewhere, particularly in Act II, he sometimes sounds oddly wooden, and self-consciously careful in his articulation. The endless love music never goes over the brink into delirium. (Compare Domingo with Wolfgang Windgassen on the legendary 1966 recording from Bayreuth—a Heldentenor in heat.) When René Pape comes on at the end of Act II to thunder the role of King Marke, he seems to be giving Domingo a primer in the dramatic recitation of German. Nina Stemme, the Isolde, is a singer of deadly precision, firing off consonants as if they were bullets. But she lacks both the ravishing warmth and the lacerating rage that characterize the perfect Isolde. (She comes closer than most, though.) Mihoko Fujimara and Olaf Bär are miscast as Brangäne and Kurwenal. Antonio Pappano coaxes awesomely voluptuous sounds from the Covent Garden orchestra, but there's something labored about this effort, as if the cast were too consumed by the imaginary


Plácido Domingo has never sung the punishing role of Tristan onstage.

ISTVAN BANYAI

burden of making the Last Opera Recording to make a living, breathing one.

In Borges's surreal story "Pierre Menard, Author of Don Quixote," an obscure French Symbolist becomes the author of Cervantes's masterpiece by copying it word for word. The Pierre Menard of our time is Lionel Sawkins, an English musicologist, who recently convinced a London court that he had composed several motets by the French Baroque composer Michel-Richard de Lalande. Or, to be precise, Sawkins convinced the court that he was owed royalties on a recording of Lalande, which appeared on the Hyperion label, and for which he had prepared scholarly editions. Little of his work could be considered original in the conventional sense—the purpose of such editions is to be unoriginal—but Sawkins was declared the rightful owner of the works. As a result, Hyperion has been forced to pay Sawkins's legal fees, which ran close to two million dollars. Hyperion, an independent label, does not have that EMI-size sum in its coffers, and it has been reduced to begging for donations on its Web site.

If you want to give support to one of the most intrepid and principled outfits in the classical business, buy a few Hyperion CDs this month. The label was founded in 1980, by Ted Perry, who, for a while, financed his projects by driving a cab. It is responsible for two of the most monumental projects in recording history: a thirty-seven-volume survey of the complete songs of Schubert, with Graham Johnson at the piano, and a fifty-nine-volume survey of the piano music of Franz Liszt, with Leslie Howard. A list of Hyperion's greatest hits would fill this column; some favorites are Brigitte Fassbaender's harrowing disk of Schubert's "Songs of Death" (Volume 11 in the complete series); Howard's compilation of Liszt's translunar late piano works (also Volume 11); the shimmering canons of John Sheppard's "Cantate Mass" and other sacred works, as sung by the Sixteen, a vocal ensemble; Frank Martin's archaic, piercing "Mass for Double Choir," held aloft by the Westminster Cathedral Choir; and, in a recording due in October, the noble Canadian baritone Gerald Finley singing the heck out of the songs of Charles Ives.

Hyperion has made a specialty of obscure composers, often British ones. Fans of Hamish MacCunn, Granville Bantock, Hubert Parry, and Robert Simpson speak of the label with hushed reverence. But one of its strongest recent issues covers music of overwhelming familiarity: the Rachmaninoff piano concertos, with Stephen Hough at the piano and Andrew Litton conducting the Dallas Symphony. These are live recordings, and they crackle with life. Hough, a pianist of keen intelligence, is alert to every emotional turn in the music without ever falling into the trap of Romantic cliché; he lets Rachmaninoff's great melodies bend and sway, but not in the expected places. Legions of great pianists and orchestras have recorded these concertos, but Hough and the Dallas musicians may have outdone them all.

"Ayre," a new song cycle by the Argentinean-born composer Osvaldo Golijov, which Deutsche Grammophon is releasing on CD on September 27th, is not only an ecstatically beautiful piece but also a radical and disorienting one. Many people, on first encountering its rasping sonorities, hurtling rhythms, and welters of lament, will be unsure whether they are listening to pop music or to classical music or to some folk ritual of indeterminate origin. However they answer, they will be right. Golijov, whose work will be celebrated at a major festival at Lincoln Center in January and February, has woven his cycle from a skein of Arabic, Hebrew, Sardinian, and Sephardic material. He has enlisted the Argentinean rock producer, film composer, and guitarist Gustavo Santaolalla to give heft and color to the sound; this music jumps out of the speakers in a way that classical records seldom do. Dawn Upshaw, the soprano, delivers an electrifying performance in which she assumes a half-dozen vocal guises. Early in the record she makes a hairpin turn from a fragile, softly glowing Sephardic song entitled "Una Madre Comió Asado" to a bloodcurdling Sardinian number entitled "Tancas Serradas a Muru"—I had to double-check the credits to make sure that Upshaw was still the singer. If a modern classical work could ever crack the Top 40, this is it: Golijov has created a new beast, of bastard parentage and glorious plumage. ♦

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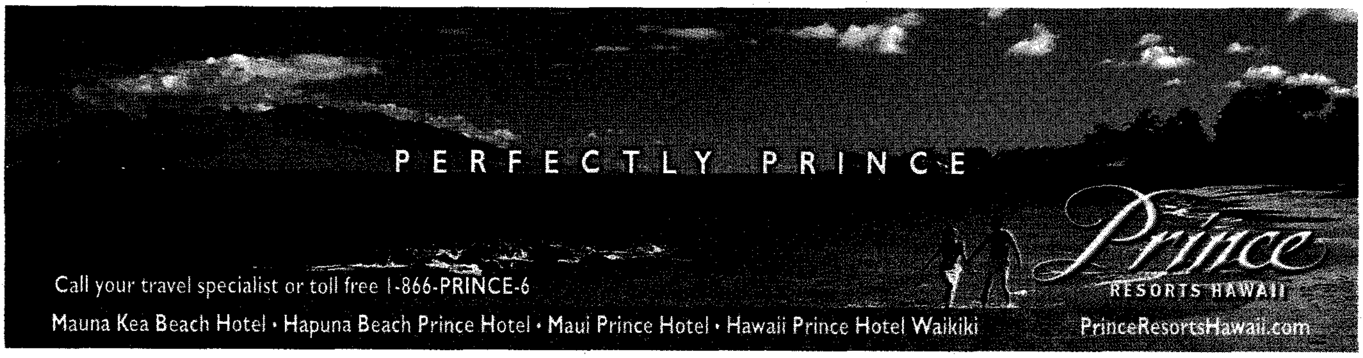

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ON TELEVISION

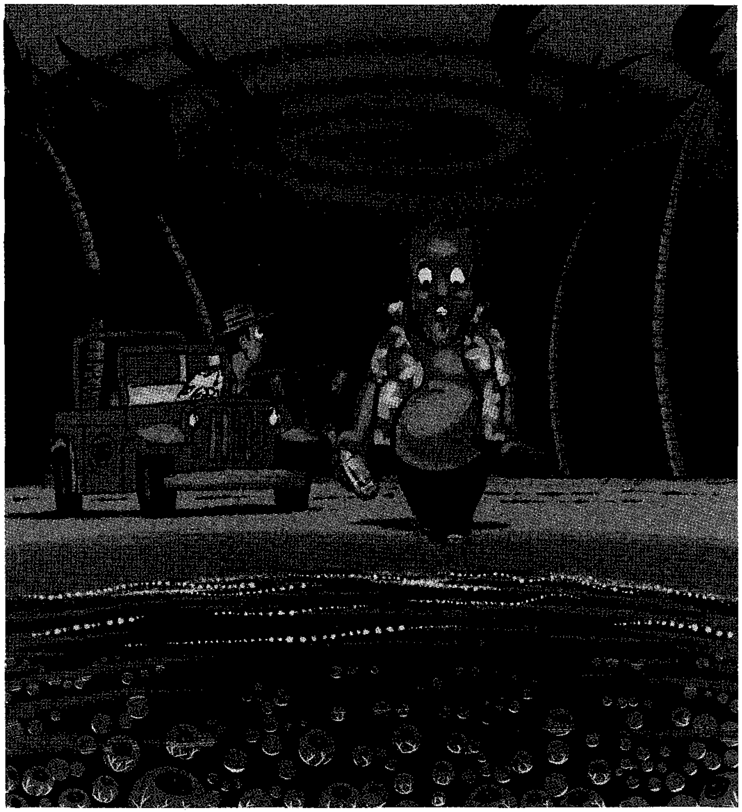
SEEING STARS

Nature and the supernatural on TV.

BY NANCY FRANKLIN

In the wake of Hurricane Katrina, a number of national television reporters have been praised for their coverage of the disaster—for "showing emotion," for not hiding their exasperation over how long it took for help to get to the region or how maddening it was when officials shamelessly claimed that a good job was being done by all. For those of us who witnessed some of the snapping—Ted Koppel shutting down the director of FEMA on "Nightline," Anderson Cooper giving hell to the Louisiana senator Mary Landrieu on CNN—this passion served as a reality check and a chance for us to vent our own anger and anguish at the way things were being handled by all levels of government. Usually on TV, things *happen;* they *move.* The inaction on the Gulf Coast was so extreme that it seemed almost as if something had gone wrong with the TV set—maybe if you smashed it, help would finally come to these people. When help did arrive, the reporters who were instrumental in forcing the hand of the Bush Administration were given battlefield promotions by media commentators. And they were handicapped like racehorses: So-and-So was the future of news, So-and-So had earned the "mantle" of the recently retired So-and-So. TV news anchors, who are already trotted out by their owners and branded before our eyes—the posters of Brian Williams that were put up around New York when he took over from Tom Brokaw toned down his perma-tan and appeared to add gray to his temples in order to make him look more serious, and Anderson Cooper has participated in any number of cutesy promos for CNN, as if the whole point of his job were to make you want to pinch his puckish thirtysomething cheeks—will now probably be under more, not less, pressure to perform as stars.

Network-news viewership went up during the hurricane and its aftermath, and the corporations behind the news will want to keep those numbers high. But what they should focus on instead is the opportunity that exists now to change the celebrity culture of network news and let newspeople be more than good-looking, smooth-talking mouthpieces. We all know that news reporters bring something of themselves to their job; why can't we let their biases, or inclinations, be acknowledged? Let them *be* themselves; let them bring *all* that they are to their jobs. Let them be stars, as they have been on the Gulf Coast, and then let them—make them—leave it at that. News anchors and reporters should stop appearing on talk shows, stop trying to be "beloved" personalities, stop kissing Jon Stewart's pompadour. Fellas, don't go on Letterman and talk about your fishing trips, your devotion to NASCAR, your anything; don't pose for magazine covers; don't accept lecture fees (if you know something that's worth telling to the Wingnut Dealers Association for fifty thousand dollars, shouldn't you be telling it to all of us on TV?); and don't go to parties that are attended by the people you cover. (In other words, be more like the CNN anchor Aaron Brown. He is one of the few newspeople on TV who don't try to hide how much of themselves they bring to the job, and yet I don't know anything about him. He has resisted becoming a brand name, an ostentatiously humble Grand Old Newsman, or a hot shot around town. He's odd, judgmental, thoughtful, and always interesting—qualities that don't prevent him from delivering the news well.)



"Invasion" is one of six new shows on things that go bump in the night.

EDWIN FOTHERINGHAM

Network news appears to be on the way out, and why shouldn't it be? Even the networks don't really care about it: their nightly broadcasts have been chopped down to around nineteen minutes of News McNuggets. What the networks should do is throw away the dated notion that anchors can, or should, make sense of the world for us, and focus on encouraging and rewarding the kind of enterprise and iconoclasm that we've seen in the last few weeks. Instead of asking their anchors to be a source of comfort or parental authority, they should just keep after them, once the career-boosting days of Hurricane Katrina are over, to still, as the New Orleans singer Aaron Neville once sang, tell it like it is.

This fall, we're getting it from all sides five nights a week: things not of this world are coming at us from outer space ("Invasion" and "Threshold"), under the sea ("Surface"), the other side ("Supernatural" and "Ghost Whisperer"), and maybe some other places, too ("Night Stalker"). There are areas of overlap among these shows, which isn't surprising, given that they all owe their existence to the success of ABC's "Lost," the show that, along with "Desperate Housewives," helped revive an entire network last season. For one thing, much of the action in these new series takes place after dark, in foggy surroundings; this is a very good time to be a manufacturer of smoke machines and blue light filters. Also, with the exception of "Supernatural," they have some of the ponderousness of CBS's hit franchise "CSI." The "CSI" shows didn't invent hilariously bad dialogue, but they have proved, three times over now, that if you distract viewers with enough gore you can get away with it.

Pilots have a big job to do, and they often overexplain characters and situations; let's hope that these new "Twilight Zone"-like series will cast off their collective assumption that the TV audience suffers from intelligence-deficit disorder—I don't think I have ever seen so many captions telling us where we are, and when. Only two of these shows are ridiculous, which is not too bad a batting average for programs featuring spectral presences, lights shooting down from the sky, weird creatures in the ocean, and people whose bodies have been taken over by evildoing aliens. "Ghost Whisperer" stars the damp Jennifer Love Hewitt as a young newlywed who transmits messages from dead people to their living loved ones, à la James Van Praagh. This lump of lead replaces "Joan of Arcadia," an entertaining show that actually grappled with issues of life and death and the existence of God and of evil; the explanation that Leslie Moonves, the chairman and C.E.O. of CBS, gave when he cancelled "Joan" was "I think talking to ghosts may skew younger than talking to God." Maybe—although I swear I can hear a ghost whispering to me that the show will soon be crossing over to the other side. In NBC's "Surface," the frowny Lake Bell (of "Boston Legal") is a marine biologist with sharp edges, who discovers a mysterious force at the bottom of the ocean. (The show was originally called "Fathom," a more appropriate name, since it concerns creatures that live under the water, not on it. Clearly, NBC doesn't know which end of this show is up.) When a government operative—a Russian-accented meanie—blocks Bell's research and she cries foul, he gets to deliver this great line: "You are a marine biologist. You of all people must know that life isn't fair."

The shows that are most compelling have as much to do with families—broken ones—as they do with the mysteries of the universe. ABC's "Invasion," which is set in South Florida (it has the bad luck to begin with a hurricane), involves a Park Ranger and his pregnant wife—a local TV reporter—his kids, and his ex-wife and her new husband, who is the town sheriff. The split wasn't amicable, apparently, and everyone suffers. (At one point, the little girl in the family refers to her mother's house as "my real house.") The plot of this show, at least in the pilot, seems as if it had been torn from "Invasion of the Body Snatchers," but it has an extra emotional element. Best of the group is "Supernatural," on the WB, which features a wonderful performance by Jensen Ackles (of "Smallville") as a young man whose mother died when he was an infant, in a way that shouldn't happen to anybody; let's just say that spontaneous combustion was involved. He and his brother (Jared Padalecki, who played Dean in "Gilmore Girls") are classic WB boys—good-looking, sensitive, troubled young men—though this is the rare WB show that has an element of humor in it. But it's also darker than the usual WB melodrama. The brothers' father became paranoid after his wife's death, gave the boys weapons training, and turned himself into an off-the-grid vigilante.

"Threshold," on CBS, is about a woman (Carla Gugino) who's an expert in global worst-case scenarios. She and three misfit scientists (Brent Spiner, Peter Dinklage, and Rob Benedict) are recruited after an unearthly malign object is discovered in the North Atlantic. I liked the show's small variations on the stereotype of an accomplished single woman, but I'm not sure that even "CSI" would permit a character to say the line "We've gotta stare into the face of the unknown and make damn sure we don't blink." ♦

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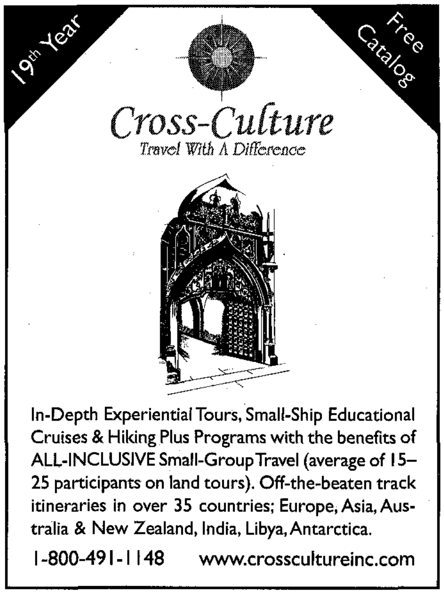
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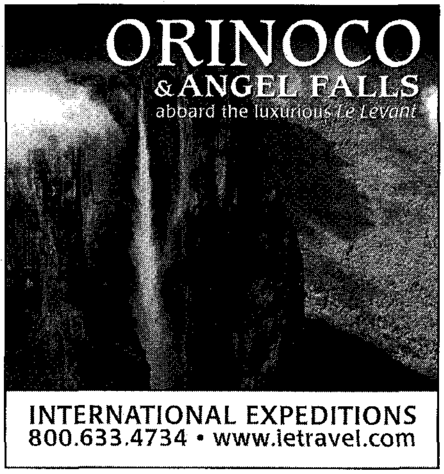
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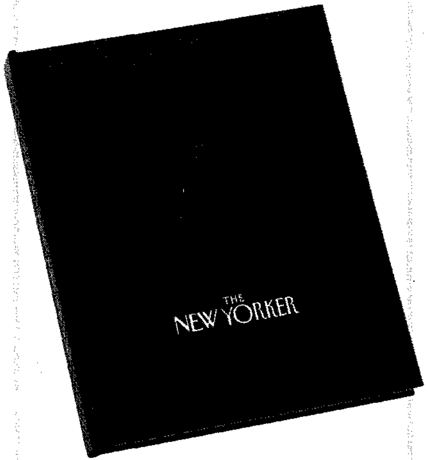

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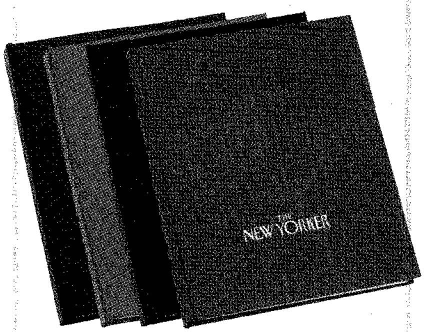

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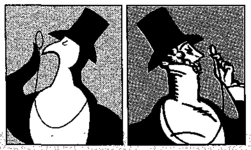

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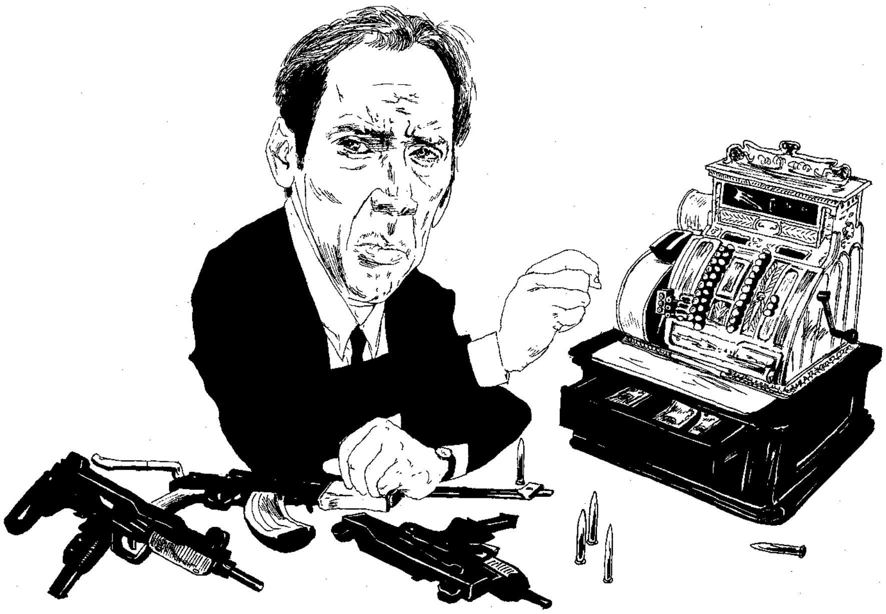
THE CURRENT CINEMA

GUNS AND MONEY

"Lord of War" and "Thumbsucker."

BY DAVID DENBY

Andrew Niccol's "Lord of War" gets under way with the story of a bullet. The camera takes us inside an armaments factory, where, from the cartridge's point of view, we see a brass casing filled, sealed, picked up and inspected, thrown back into a pile, and crated. The box is then turned over to a Russian officer and shipped to African thugs, who take the cartridge out of its crate and give it to a fighter, who fires it into the head of an unsuspecting young boy. This sequence—at first nifty, then horrifying—is composed of many separate shots, but the editor, Zach Staenberg, cut the material in such a way that the bullet's progression feels continuous and inexorable. At the climax, the camera seems to be flying through the air straight at the boy. A malicious wit, this Andrew Niccol: by forcing the audience to take the bullet's flight, he is suggesting that we are complicit both in arms sales (the United States is a leading exporter) and in eager enjoyment of movie violence, of which this sequence is a startling and admonitory example.



Nicolas Cage plays an international arms dealer who is the most candid of cynics.

"Lord of War," the story of the rise of an international arms dealer, is a raffishly ironic and insinuating movie—and probably the most sheerly enjoyable film of the year so far. Its hero, Yuri Orlov (Nicolas Cage), a fluent and plausible-sounding fellow, was born in Ukraine but grew up in Brighton Beach, among Jews who were mainly either pious or violent. Yuri, however, is neither. He's not even Jewish. His father posed as a Jew to gain asylum in the United States, and Yuri, playing the angles, uses that identity when it suits him. He's a con man who fights off depression by trying on roles—he owns passports from at least six different countries. After the bullet scene, Yuri, gazing at the camera, takes us into his confidence in the manner of Shakespeare's Richard III. He announces that he will not lie to us or try to make himself look good, and it's a promise that Niccol keeps on his behalf. The picture, which might be subtitled "A Rogue's Progress," moves along quickly, with Cage, in a new, booming, man-of-the world voice, narrating and

ANDY FRIEDMAN

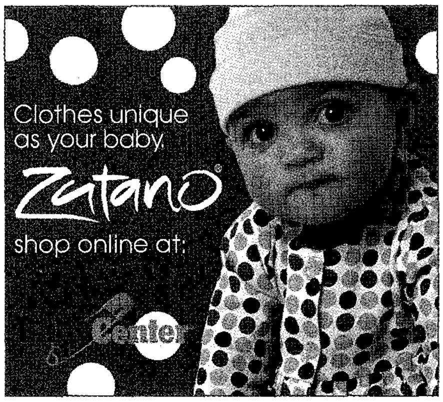
stitching together brief scenes of Yuri's life as a seller of rifles, machine guns, and grenades to crumbum Third World dictators. The narration is faintly reminiscent of Ray Liotta's voice-over in Martin Scorsese's great gangster movie "GoodFellas." The two men go through similar arcs of precipitous ascent, weird adventure, positive cash flow, high living, abundant white powder, and then trouble. But Cage's words are jauntier than Liotta's. His tone is, roughly, "Yes, I'm a bad guy, and my life is a mess, but look at the fun I'm having!" Yuri is the most candid of cynics. In a semi-chastened moment, when he has temporarily withdrawn from arms dealing, he says, "Thank God there are still legal ways to exploit developing countries." If you're capable of finding that remark funny as well as vile, then you may be impure enough to enjoy this movie and its scapegrace hero.

Niccol, who was born in New Zealand in 1964, set up shop as a feature director with the sleek, pastel-blue science-fiction fantasia "Gattaca" (1997), which was about a genetically perfect totalitarian future. He then wrote "The Truman Show" (1998), whose hero, a cheerful insurance salesman, slowly realizes that he's living in a sitcom. Niccol seemed to be some sort of new "conceptual" movie artist, a creator of artificial worlds. In "S1m0ne," which he wrote and directed in 2002, a movie director loses his leading lady and develops a stunning digital substitute. "Gattaca" was very good sci-fi, but the puckish conceits of the two later movies were so thoroughly worked out that, at times, they left you little to respond to. In "Lord of War," Niccol has at last begun to embrace the messy world we live in—or, at least, his own hyped-up, viciously entertaining version of it.

Arms dealers like Yuri, who easily bribe Soviet-made weaponry out of the hands of the military, have a stake in both Eastern-bloc corruption and endless civil strife in the Third World. It's a grotesque situation that Niccol renders as exuberant black comedy. He turns the fictional dictator of Liberia, Andre Baptiste (Eammon Walker), into a flamboyant B-movie gangster who likes to execute people on the spot. He has Yuri lean on a fallen statue of Lenin while working out his latest deal on a calculator. A while later, Yuri addresses a sardonic Brechtian love letter to the AK-47, the lightweight assault rifle cherished by ragtag armies the world over. This is smart-ass filmmaking—glib and often overexplicit—but the fecundity of Niccol's audacities becomes exhilarating. Rather than do routine exposition, Niccol brings out the pop-fantasy element in Yuri's climb to wealth. When Yuri tricks a tall, gorgeous model (Bridget Moynahan) into meeting him, Niccol gives the meeting the gleaming feel of a beach-side rum commercial, and the scene is soon followed by a white-on-white wedding overlooking Central Park. The ritziness is satirical—Yuri's taste is no better than nouveau-riche swank. It's only when Niccol photographs Africa, as a ravished but beautiful land, that he sobers up and turns to earth tones. In Africa, Yuri's games don't seem funny, and the ripe magnificence of the continent acts as a reproof.

Nicolas Cage has been appearing in movies since he was a teen-ager, and he is now forty-one. His face is fuller, and he has almost lost the hangdog woefulness of his youth—almost, but not quite, which turns out to be a good thing. In order to like Yuri, we need to stay in touch with his fear that he's just a cheap hustler from Brighton Beach after all, and Cage instinctively understands that. Now and then, his voice falters, his drawbridge eyebrows rise, and he allows Yuri's businessman's confidence to slip into despair. Yuri quickly recovers, but, by the end of the movie, he has taken part in so many nauseating deals that his soul has faded away. Again and again, Niccol puts him in situations where he has to face the awfulness of what he does. No fewer than three foils are posed against him: his kid brother (Jared Leto), who joins him in the arms trade, but then has misgivings and collapses into druggy hysteria; an older, "moral" arms dealer (Ian Holm), who sells to rebels rather than to dictators; and a straight-arrow Interpol agent (Ethan Hawke), who is obsessed with Yuri but won't exceed the law in order to destroy him. They are better people than Yuri, and they say scornful things to him that are true, yet, like Richard III, he's the hero because he's fully conscious of everything he does, and gives it shape and body in words.

Movie taste has turned very square



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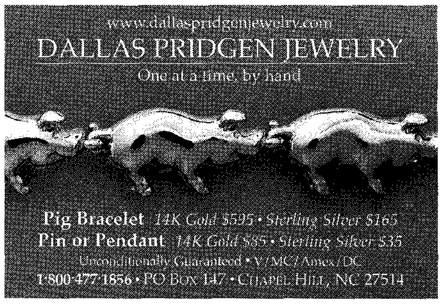
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in this country, and I don't know if audiences are prepared to accept a shitheel as a hero. "Lord of War" tells you why intelligent people may enjoy doing evil things, and it lets you in on the fun. It has been made without hypocrisy, which is not something I'm sure I would say of the other current movie devoted to Westerners mucking up in Africa—the high-minded but often fuzzy and self-regarding "Constant Gardener," a film that hurls many vague accusations and leaves one in a teary, dissatisfied funk. "Lord of War" is lower in tone, but it's also memorable and pleasure-giving, and its sense of outrage is just as strong. The bullet ride near the beginning of the movie is matched in shock by a sequence near the end in which Yuri's private cargo plane, loaded with arms, makes a forced landing on an African road, scattering people in terror. Seen from below, the plane arrives like a malignant invader from another planet. Niccol is too smart to preach to us, but his anger and sorrow are there, even as he's putting on a terrific show.

Some of the new independent-film directors, like Phil Morrison, who made the recent "Junebug," and Mike Mills, the director of "Thumbsucker," have developed a quiet camera style, a restrained color palette, and a way of shaping their scenes that is searching and open-ended—not tentative, exactly, but encouraging of ambiguities and multiple meanings. In "Junebug," Embeth Davidtz, a sophisticated Chicago art dealer, tries too hard to win over her husband's troubled North Carolina family, and Morrison holds scenes to the moment of embarrassment, and then of revelation. "Thumbsucker," which is about a seventeen-year-old boy, Justin (Lou Pucci), who retreats into fantasy as a solace, and then pulls himself out of it, is yet another coming-of-age movie, but it feels fresh, almost improvised, mainly because Mills doesn't drive his scenes toward an obvious resolution. Justin, growing up in Oregon without any role models in sight (Keanu Reeves, Vince Vaughn, and Benjamin Bratt all give amusing performances as stumbling adults), is very bright, but the boy, out of some mysterious mixture of pride and fear, initially won't define himself. Much of "Thumbsucker," which is based on Walter Kirn's 1999 novel, is devoted to that great middle-class activity: hanging out. What do Justin's inarticulate father (Vincent D'Onofrio) and role-playing girlfriend (Kelli Garner) really want from him? What does he want from himself? That's for the actors to hint at and for us to find out. The movie never reaches much of a dramatic climax, but there are many surprises on the way to nowhere, and Mills's refusal to rush brings out the humor and the hidden tensions in material that, in more impatient hands, might have been conventionally winsome. ♦

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Volume LXXXI, No. 29, September 26, 2005. The New Yorker (ISSN 0028-792X) is published weekly (except for six combined issues: Jan. 24 & 31, Feb. 14 & 21, June 13 & 20, July 11 & 18, Aug. 8 & 15, Dec. 26 & Jan. 2) by The Condé Nast Publications, which is a division of Advance Magazine Publishers Inc. PRINCIPAL OFFICE: The Condé Nast Building, 4 Times Square, New York, NY 10036. Louis Cona, vice-president and publisher; William Li, associate publisher; Ronda Carnegie, advertising director; Gail Day, advertising director; Jamie Engel, advertising director; Susan Harrington, director of creative services; Ilene Danuff, marketing services director; Douglas Chilcott, associate creative services director/promotion; L. Paul Robertson, associate creative services director/events; Jacqueline Cinguina, director of integrated marketing; Judy Safir, director of finance; Edward Klaris, general counsel. Advance Magazine Publishers Inc.: S. I. Newhouse, Jr., chairman; Steven T. Florio, vice-chairman; Charles H. Townsend, president and C.O.O.; John W. Bellando, executive vice-president and C.F.O.; Jill Bright, executive vice-president–human resources; John Buese, executive vice-president–chief information officer; David Orlin, senior vice-president–strategic sourcing; Robert Bennis, senior vice-president–real estate. Shared services provided by Advance Magazine Group: David B. Chemidlin, senior vice-president–general manager, shared services center. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY, and at additional mailing offices. Canada Post Publications Mail Agreement No. 40644503. Canadian Goods and Services Tax Registration No. R123242885. Canada Post return undeliverable Canadian addresses to: P.O. Box 874, Station *Main, Markham, ON L3P 8L4.*

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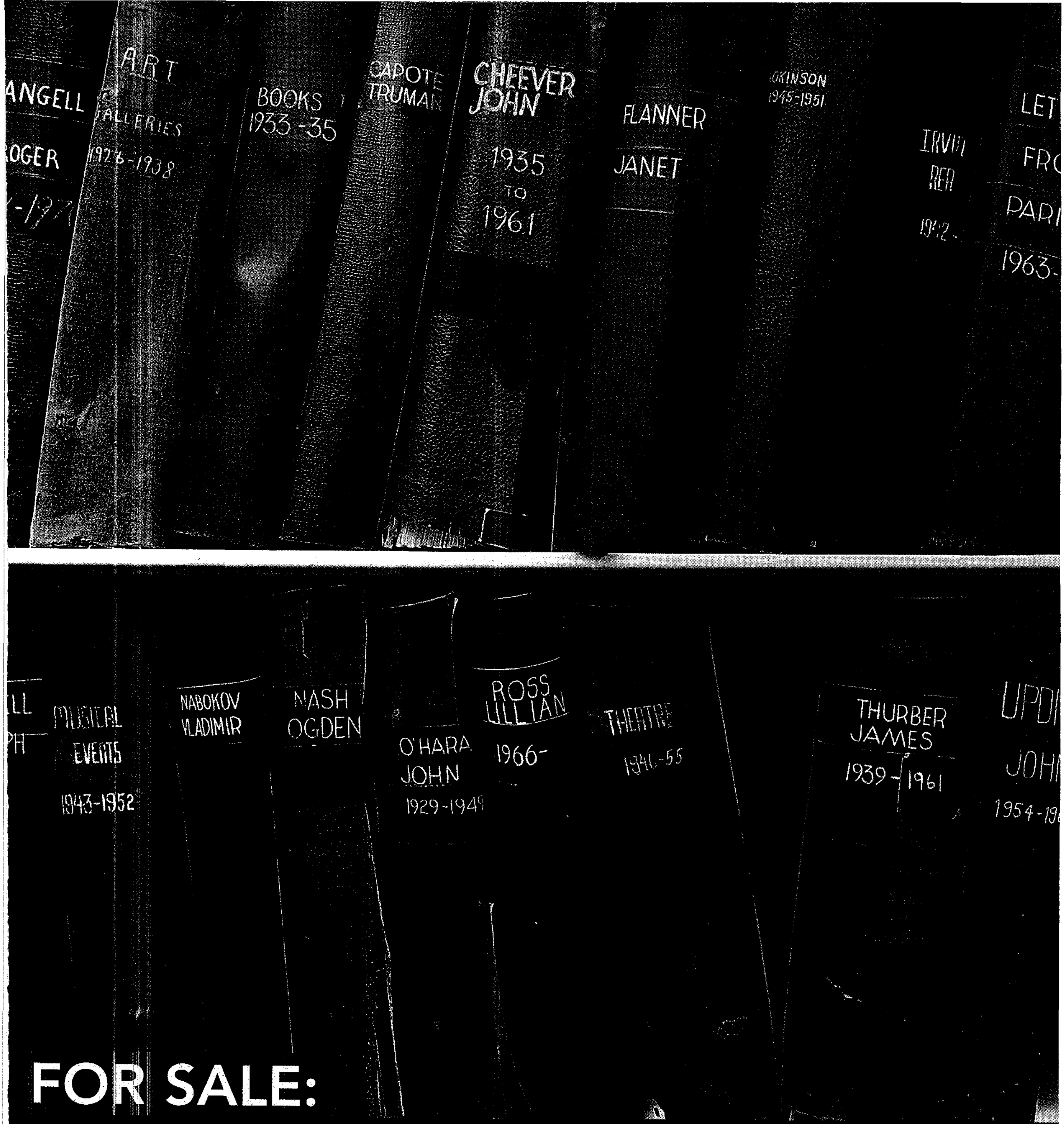
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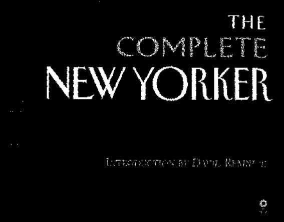
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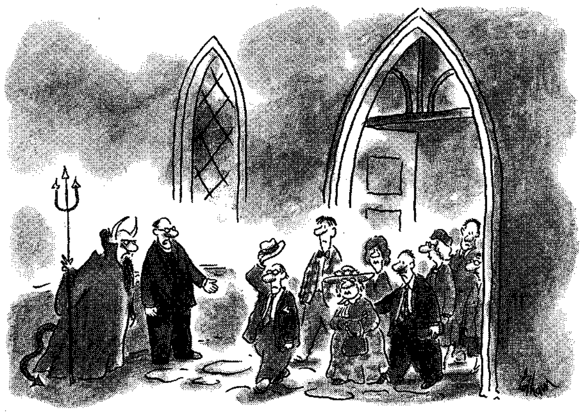
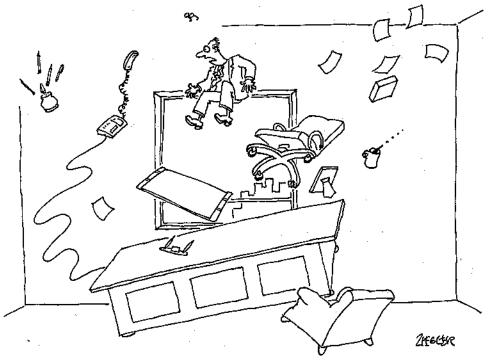


"O.K., they're yours, but I still don't know where you got that fourth ace."
Robert Dodge, Los Osos, Calif.



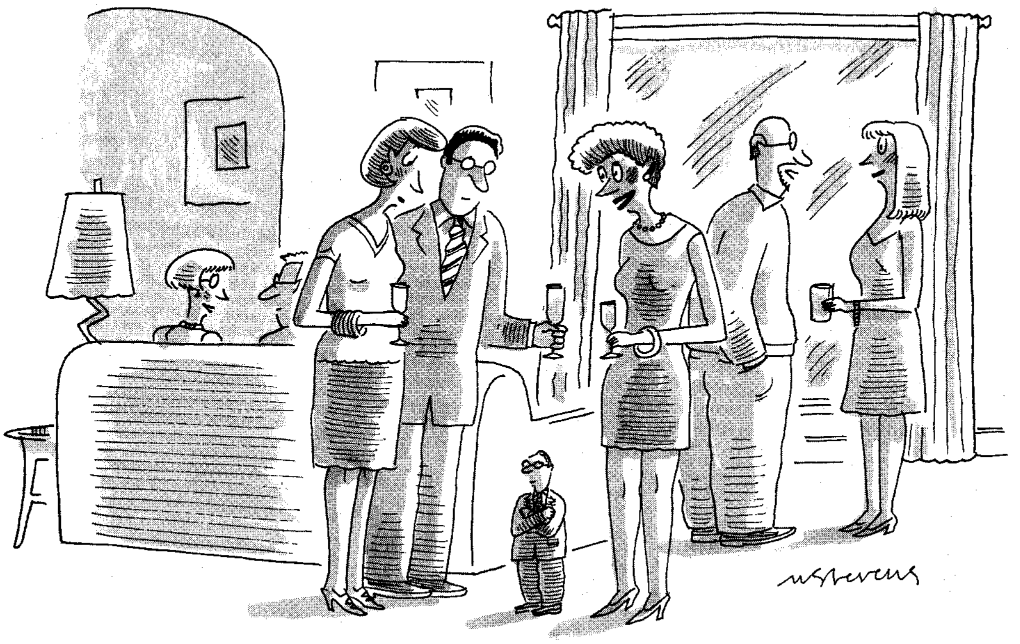
THE FINALISTS

"FEMA here. No, we haven't had any substantiated reports of earthquakes."
Neal Eckel, Tucson, Ariz.

"Let me call you back. I left God holding on the other line."
Anthony Roesch, Chicago, Ill.

"Miss Jones, send in the extra paperweights."
Robert Lucas, Providence, R.I.

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



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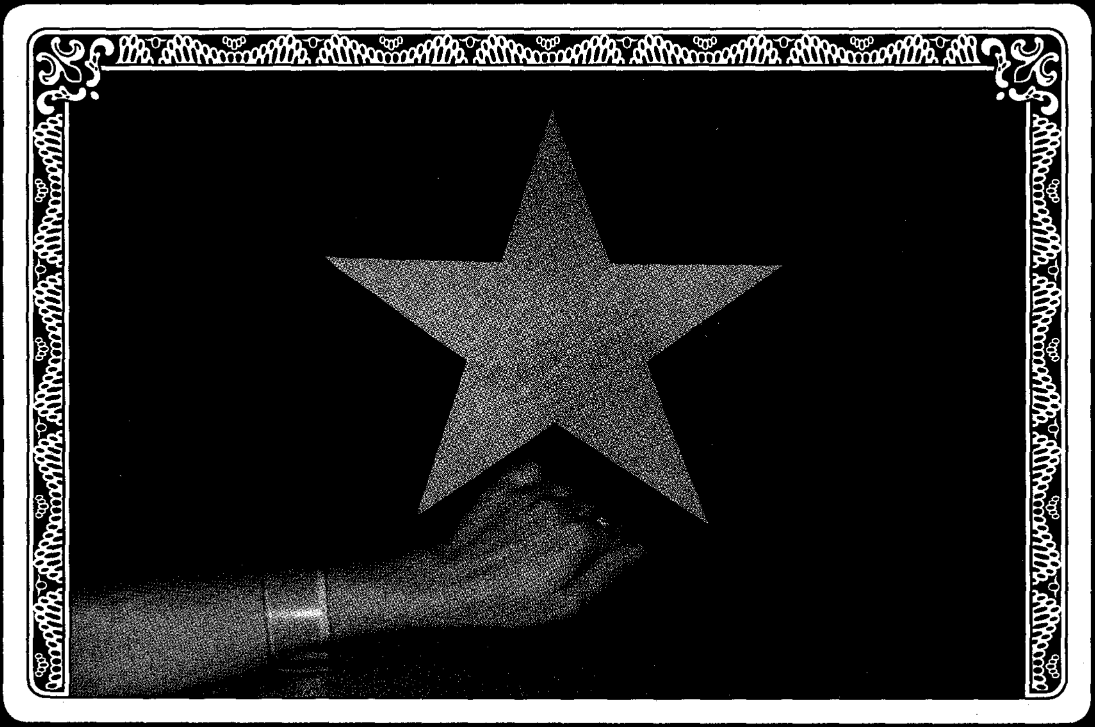

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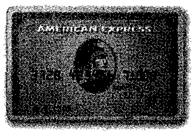

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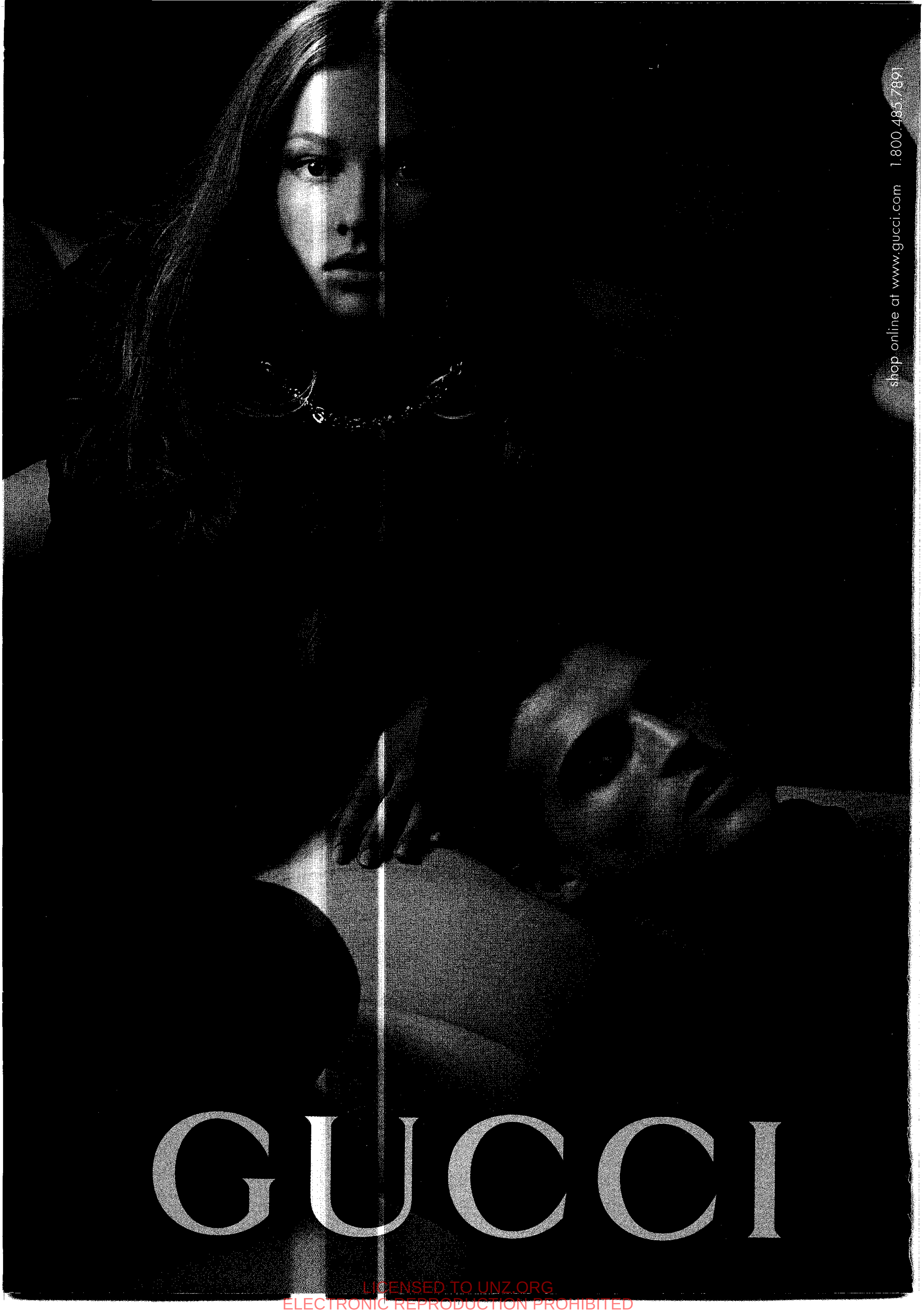
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